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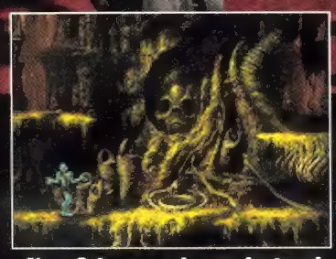

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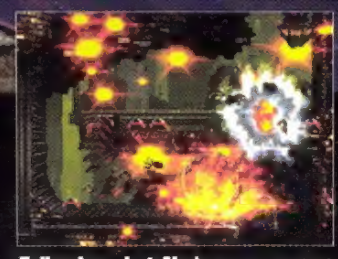

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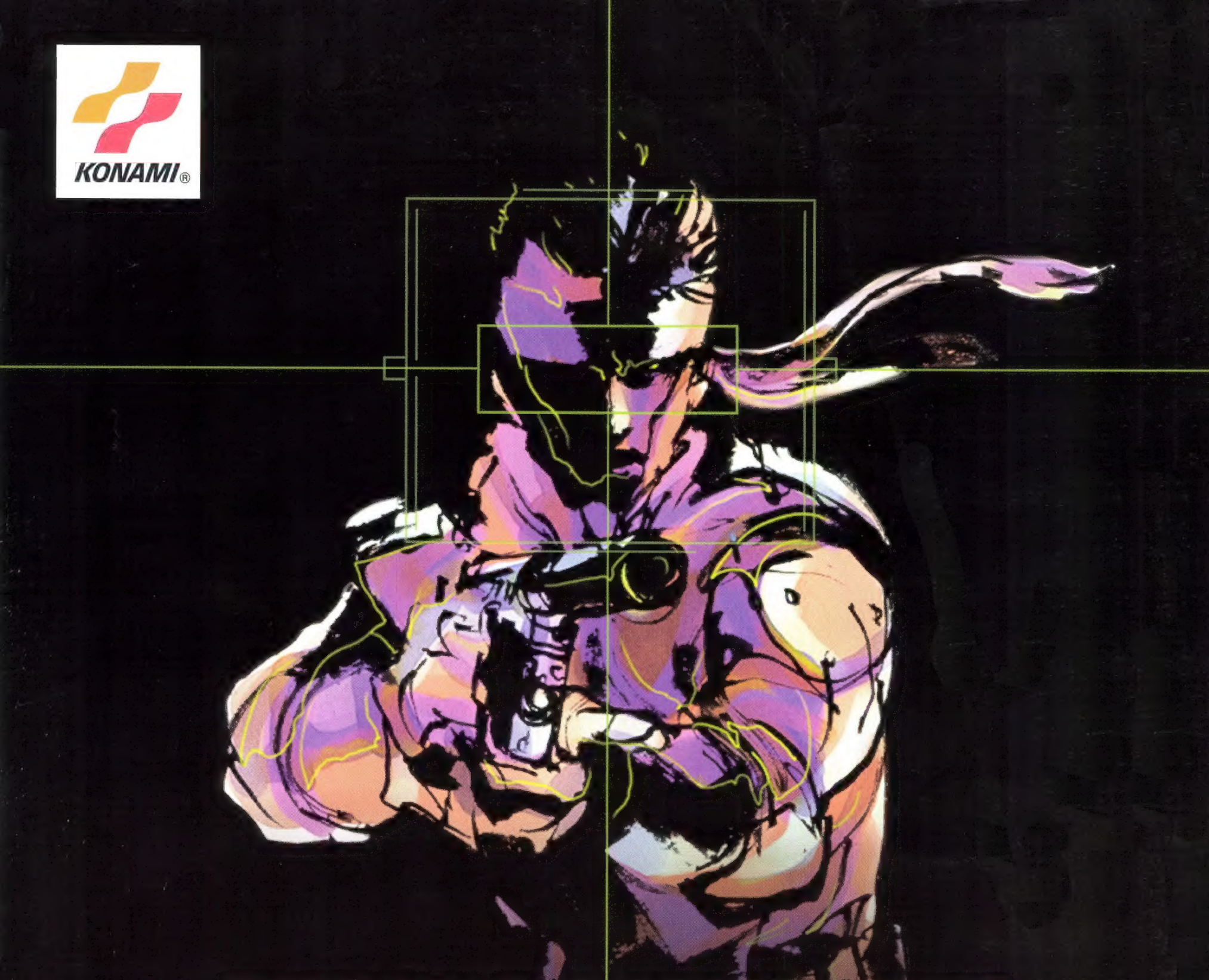

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Our Interviewing the Big Guys feature ends for 1998 with industry players Electronic Arts, Sony, Namco, Interplay, and Sierra. Page 34.

Electronic Arts Buys Westwood

By Ben Rinaldi

Electronic Arts just got a little bigger with the recent acquisition of Westwood Studios from Spelling Entertainment and Viacom. EA purchased all outstanding stock of Westwood and certain assets of Virgin Interactive for $122.5 million in cash. The transaction essentially removes Virgin as a player in the videogame industry and the status of upcoming Virgin games like *Thrill Kill* and *Recoil* is up in the air, as EA did not reveal their future plans for these games. Pending regulatory approvals, the acquisition is expected to close at the end of September.

With Westwood, EA adds another top-notch studio to their impressive list of developers ensuring that they remain at the top of the industry. They now hold the rights to Westwood's best-selling franchises including *Command & Conquer* and *Lands of Lore*. The sale comes just in time for EA to reap the benefits of the soon-to-be released sequel *Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun*, one of the most anticipated games of the year for PC. Westwood had been shopped around by Spelling and Viacom for some time as they were looking to reduce debt and concentrate on their core television business.

C&C: Tiberian Sun

EA was quick to jump at the opportunity presented by Spelling and even went so far as to sign Westwood founders Brett Sperry and Louis Castle to five year deals. President of EA worldwide studios, Don Mattrick explained, "Westwood is one of the most respected studios in the world, with an impressive portfolio of best-selling franchises and brilliant creative talent. Their strong PC product line will allow us to provide an even broader array of high quality products to our customers." GW

MicroProse Goes To Hasbro

By Ben Rinaldi

After acquiring Atari's classic line of arcade games and Tiger Electronics, Hasbro continued its buying spree with the purchase of long time PC games publisher, MicroProse, Inc. MicroProse had been looking for a buyer for some time before Hasbro finally stepped up. The deal comes after rumored interest from THQ and planned merger between MicroProse and GT Interactive failed in February. The two companies were in negotiations for a month before coming to terms on the purchase price estimated to be $6 a share or $70 million including assumed debt and redeemable preferred stock. Hasbro will merge MicroProse and its operations with its software publishing arm, Hasbro Interactive and future titles will be co-branded as a MicroProse/Hasbro game.

According to Hasbro Interactive president Tom Dusenberry, Hasbro saw this as the perfect opportunity to expand in three important areas; brands and content, R&D assets and European distribution. "We're very excited about the acquisition. Combining our resources with MicroProse's expertise in game development is a perfect match for both companies," said Dusenberry. MicroProse is well known for making quality games and have some of the most successful franchises of all time. Games like

Continued on page 2

Cendant Puts Software Division on the Block

By Reilly Brennan

Recent problems at Cendant Corp. have caused the company to put its consumer software division up for sale. The company has hired Credit Suisse First Boston to handle the sale or initial public offering of the division, which includes Sierra, Knowledge Adventure, Blizzard Entertainment and Davidson & Associates. Cendant recently sold its Hebdo Mag International subsidiary, a classified ads publisher, to management and has also announced the resignation of its chairman, Walter Forbes.

Henry R. Silverman, president and CEO stated, "We have no comparative advantages as owners or managers of our software businesses. Accordingly we have deter-

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TOP 20 Interactive Entertainment Manufacturers

Ranked By Units Sold, July '98

June Rank	July Rank	Manufacturer
1	1	Nintendo of America
2	2	Sony Corp.
6	3	Midway Home Ent.
5	4	Acclaim Entertainment
4	5	Interact Accessories
3	6	Electronic Arts
7	7	THQ
**	8	Ocean of America
8	9	Namco
10	10	Sega of America
9	11	Capcom
12	12	Mad Catz
11	13	Activision
13	14	Eidos
15	15	Interplay
14	16	Hasbro Interactive
**	17	Take 2/BMG Int.
18	18	Fox Interactive
16	19	Konami
17	20	GT Internactive

** - Not in Top 20 last month
Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Software Service

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MicroProse Goes To Hasbro

Continued from page 1

Civilization, X-Com, MechWarrior, Magic the Gathering, Star Trek: Next Generation, Top Gun, F-15 Strike Eagle and *Worms* have all been critically acclaimed and will give Hasbro the necessary resources to compete in almost all major PC game categories. Many hard-core gamers know the MicroProse name but viewed Hasbro as a toy company, the merger gives them instant credibility and allows Hasbro to be a full fledged player in the PC industry. Along with the games and technologies in 3D simulation, artificial game intelligence and networked

Magic the Gathering

game capabilities, Hasbro was attracted to MicroProse's strong international operations as the toy company was actively pursuing the international marketplace.

"This now gives us a legitimate presence in the European distribution market and that had been a goal of Hasbro's for some time," added Dusenberry. "Almost overnight we became a $100 million European company."

MicroProse already had plans to develop games for Dreamcast but now it looks official as Dusenberry confirmed plans to convert their action titles to all home consoles saying, "It makes perfect sense to convert MicroProse's action titles to home consoles including Nintendo 64, PlayStation and Sega's Dreamcast." Exactly which games will appear on multiple platforms was not disclosed.

The acquisition goes even deeper than the points highlighted above. Having the necessary resources, the possibilities of action figures and toy lines based on MicroProse properties is another avenue that Hasbro can pursue and capitalize on. **GW**

Toys "R" Us Reveals Second Quarter Financial Results

By Jennifer Klinger

Toys "R" Us has reported its financial results for the second quarter ended August 1st. Sales remained constant at $2 billion, the same amount as the second quarter last year. Sales for the first six months of 1998 were slightly higher than a year ago, $4.1 billion versus $3.9 billion. Second quarter net earnings were down from $15.9 million compared to $36.7 million last year and net earnings for the first six months of 1998 were also down from $66.1 million in 1997 to $35.1 million in 1998.

The poor results were explained by TRU CEO, Robert Nakasone, "Our USA comparable toy store sales decreased 2% for the second quarter and were flat for the first six months. This was primarily due to lower sales of video hardware, including the impact of price deflation, as well as lower sales of virtual pets, plush and action figures, all of which had very strong sales a year ago." Nakasone also added that international sales were impacted because of the downturn in the Japanese economy.

TRU said that a long-term plan is in place to help them rebound. This includes a new senior management team, less inventory to improve operational efficiencies and new store prototypes offering diverse merchandise. For the rest of 1998 TRU plans to open 5 new stores in the U.S. and 35 new stores internationally. **GW**

Cendant Puts Software Division on the Block

Continued from page 1

-mined these units do not fit within our future business model. Cendant will immediately classify Sierra and the other consumer software businesses as discontinued operations and will report financial results for these units on this basis when the company restates its financial results.

Cendant was the creation of a merger between CUC International and HFS Inc. last December. Since that time the corporation has come under fire from investors for questionable accounting practices. Cendant's stock has taken a quite a hit since the problems first started, dropping more than 50 percent. **GW**

X Marks The Spot For Babbages

By Ben Rinaldi

Software-specialty store, Babbage's Etc. is testing a new store format called Planet X. Trying to differentiate themselves from competitor, Electronics Boutique, Planet X will still be targeted at core game-players but will also carry specialty products designed to attract those consumers who are interested in other aspects relating to the video game business.

Inside a PlanetX

Besides software, Planet X carries a wide assortment of toys, action figures and graphic novels based on video games. The action-figure market alone is huge with toys based on *Tomb Raider, Final Fantasy VII, Quake II* and Nintendo's upcoming *Zelda* and *Pokemon* games leading the way. The new merchandise will appeal to gamers and allow Babbages early entry into an untapped market. By stocking liscensed product Babbages hopes to set a trend and be a leader in a category that has yet to be fully exploited.

Babbages

Babbages opened two test stores recently, one in Paramus, NJ and one in Glendale, California. Initial response has been positive but only time will tell if consumers take a long-term interest in the new format. If all goes well Babbages will convert all of their stores to Planet X. **GW**

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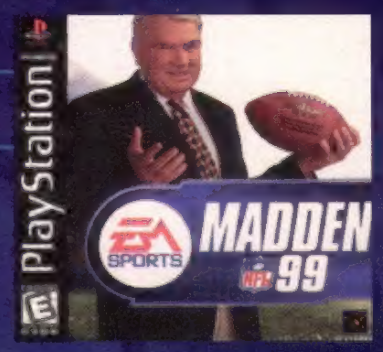
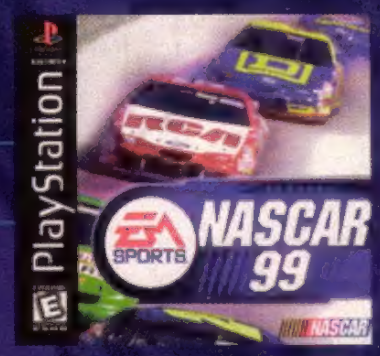


Tackle Harder:Madden 99

Survive Better:LAPD



Turn Quicker:Nascar 99

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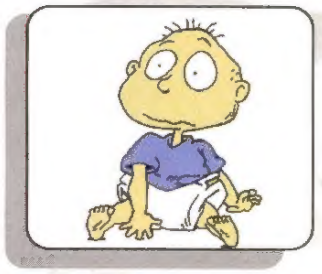

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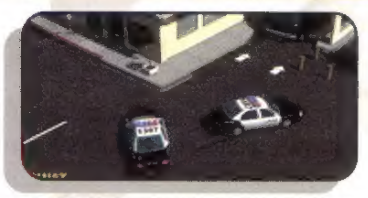

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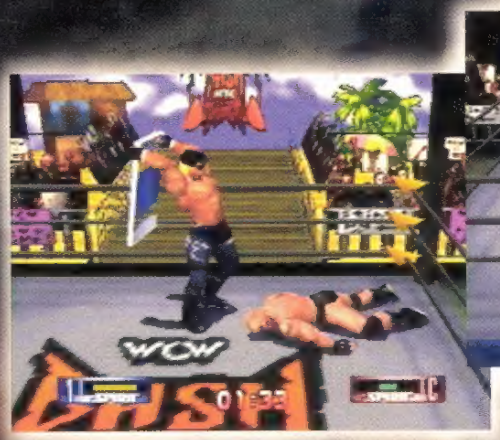

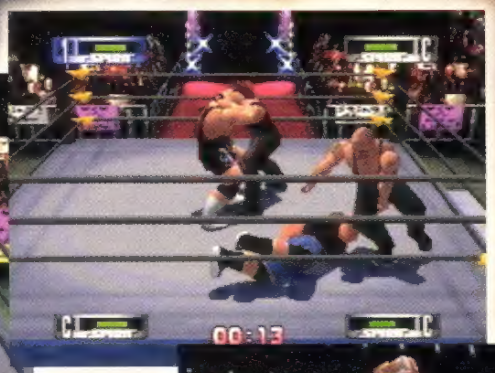

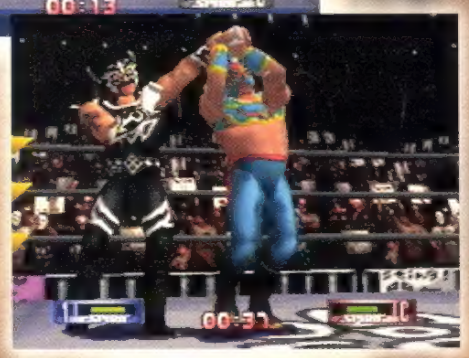

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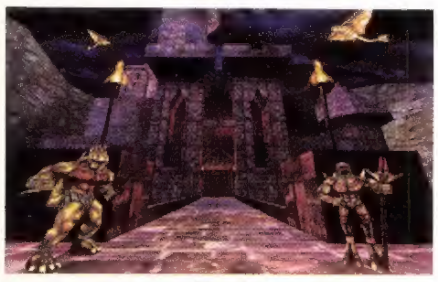
GT Interactive Reports 1st Quarter Earnings

By Reilly Brennan

GT Interactive Software reported its financial results from its fiscal first quarter ended June 30, 1998. Net Revenues rose 13 percent to $116 million but net income was down from $4.4 million or $.07 diluted earnings per share in the first three months of 1997 to $1.8 million or $.03 diluted earnings per share in the same period 1998. The loss in net income is attributed to cost



Unreal

increases of $3.1 million due to mergers and acquisitions and depreciation expense for new financial and operational systems and higher rent related to new facilities. Additionally research and development expenses increased $13.5 million, which includes $3 million for additional development in company studios as well as $9.5 million in advances to third parties.

GT chairman and CEO, Ron Chaimowitz explained other developments during the quarter, "We continued to grow our publishing business this quarter, driven by the global best-seller, *Unreal*, and experienced continued strong sales of industry chart-toppers *Deer Hunter*, *Rocky Mountain Trophy Hunter* and *Freddi Fish 3*. Chaimowitz also added that publishing sales were 61 percent of total sales and value publishing increased 22% over last year.

Some highlights of the first quarter includes; 500,000 units shipped of *Unreal*, *Deer Hunter* and *Rocky Mountain Trophy Hunter* among the top selling PC games for the quarter and GT achieved the number three market share in games (units, dollars). GT is looking forward to a strong line-up of games in the second quarter spear-headed by *Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus* for PlayStation and PC, *Duke Nukem: Time to Kill* for PlayStation, *Rogue Trip* for PlayStation and *Blood II* & *Deer Hunter II* for PC. **GW**

Nintendo Serves Up Kentucky Fried *Pokemon*

By Ben Rinaldi

Nintendo is preparing to invade the U.S. shores with their wildly popular *Pokemon* franchise from Japan. More than 8 million Game Boy games, one million music CDs and 400 million trading cards based on

Pokemon have been sold in Japan. In order to build awareness here in the States, Nintendo is launching a cartoon series, a toy line and of course the *Pokemon* Game Boy title. On top of that Nintendo recently announced a promotional campaign with Kentucky Fried Chicken that will run from November 9 through December 20.

As part of the $17 million dollar campaign, visitors at KFC restaurants can collect or directly purchase one of four *Pokemon* character beanbags or purchase a KFC kids' meal and receive a special Pokemon toy, such as coin pouches, puzzle blocks and stickers. To support the promotion KFC will run 15 and 30 second television spots and ads in national magazines. They will also post point-of-sales material inside KFC restaurants.

Nintendo added that *Pokemon* has already achieved a "must have" for the holidays and stated that the partnership with KFC will only add to the excitement. For their part Nintendo will provide Game Boy systems and *Pokemon* GB software for demonstration in KFC's display units, run ads in Nintendo Power magazine and highlight the program on their pokemon.com web site. **GW**

Sabrina Performs Magic On the PC

By Ben Rinaldi

Cendant Software and Simon & Schuster Interactive are planning to give little kids a chance to interact with *Sabrina: The Teenage Witch* on the PC. This fall Cendant, with help

Sabrina: The Teenage Witch for the PC

from a joint-venture with Simon & Schuster will launch the game based on the popular television series starring Melissa Joan Hart. Cendant had enough foresight (and some luck) to acquire the rights to the license before the show became the worldwide success it is today. *Sabrina* the game is a 3D adventure that takes players on a wild ride through worlds and backdrops modeled from the actual TV sets on the show.

Aimed at the untapped 8-12 year old girl market, general manager of the Cendant Software/Simon & Schuster joint venture, Sue Kisla is confident they have a winner on their hands as fans of the show are sure to want the video game, "Sabrina is a typical teenage girl that I think girls can relate to. She's smart, witty and friendly and something girls aspire to be. It's a fun wholesome licensed entertainment game." From the beginning, the goal was to match the game's look and feel closely to the show. Using the actors to do the voices helped add a touch of "realism" and small details from the game were carefully monitored to conform to the show. "The development of the game is very much in tune with the characters of the show. It's very funny, very in-line with something you would see from the show," added Kisla. "We were constantly in approval process with Viacom. They approve the art work and make sure we're being true to the show. Everything from the script to the artwork to what the characters are saying and what they look like got approved by Viacom."

When the game is released, Cendant plans to give full support at retail with in-store POP material and print advertising in teen magazines. Cendant also plans a limited time promotion to pack-in Tiger Electronics' *"Salem the Cat" Gigapet* with the first fifty thousand copies of *Sabrina*. A cross-promotion with the upcoming *Sabrina* music soundtrack is another way Cendant plans to spread the word.

With a well recognized license at the height of popularity and the growing

Sabrina: The Teenage Witch for the PC

girl market, Cendant is hopeful that *Sabrina* will offer an excellent alternative to the *Barbie* games that dominate the market. Kisla closed by saying, "We're real excited about it. It's a phenomenal license to have. I think it's a great product that will be on every kids Christmas list." **GW**

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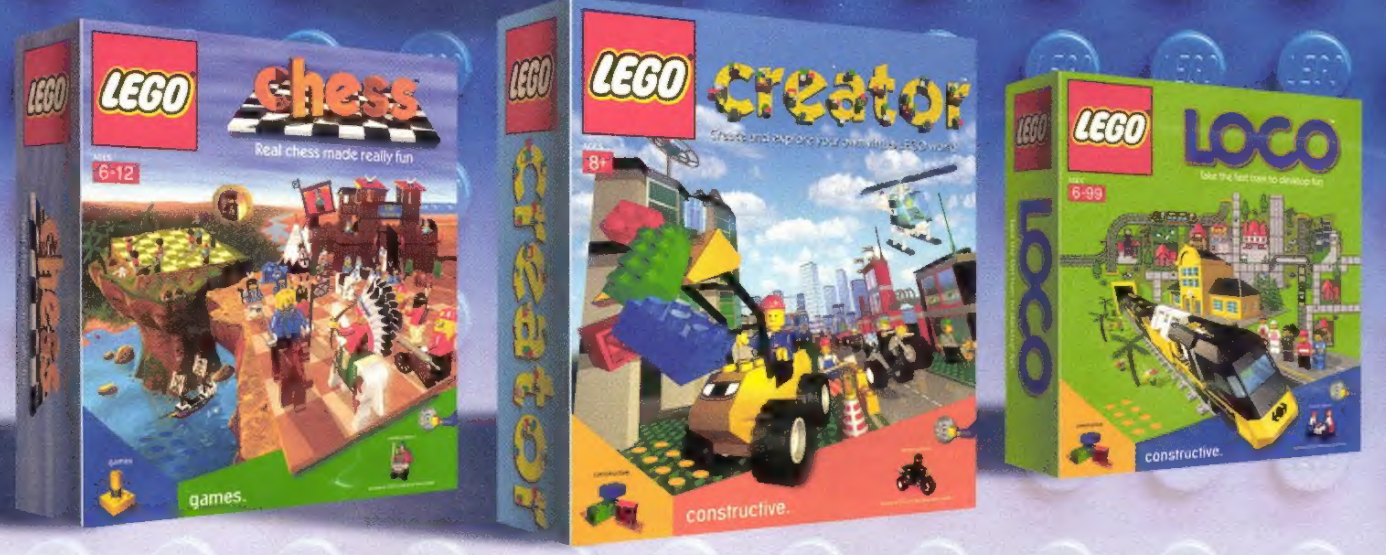

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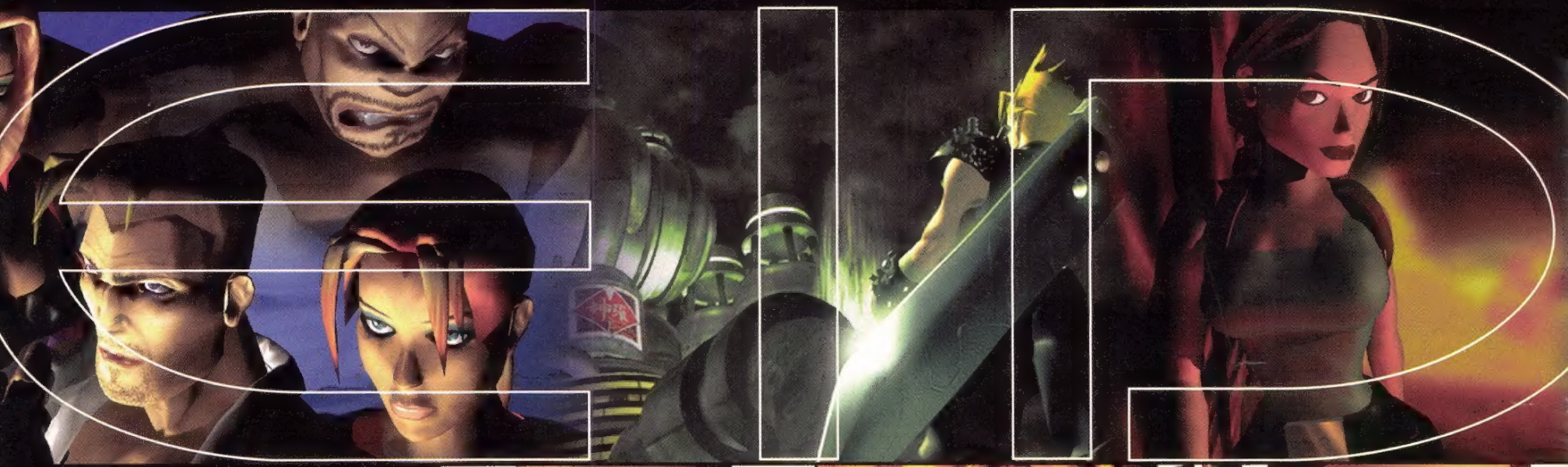

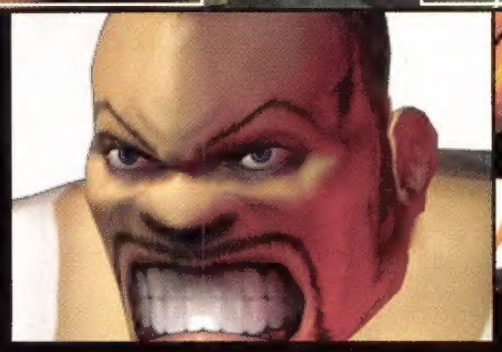

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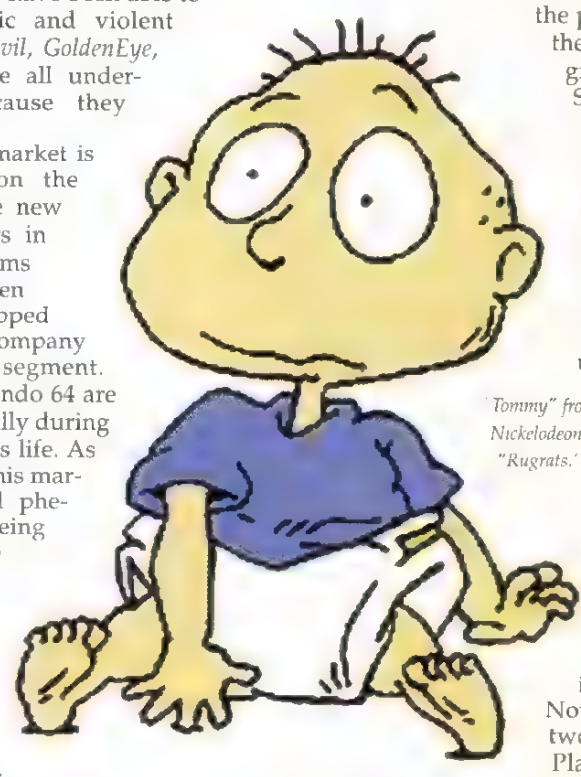
Companies Shift Focus To Younger Gamers

By Ben Rinaldi

The kids who grew up on video games in the 80's have become adults and are naturally looking for the hard-edged, adult-oriented games. With the increased horsepower provided by PlayStation and Nintendo 64, developers have been able to depict much more realistic and violent games. Titles like *Resident Evil*, *GoldenEye*, *Twisted Metal* and *Turok* are all understandably best-sellers because they appeal to this demographic.

Now that the grown-up market is well covered, especially on the PlayStation, what about the new generation of young gamers in the 8-14 age group? It seems nearly everyone has forgotten about this somewhat untapped market. Nintendo is one company who hasn't ignored this segment. Many of the games for Nintendo 64 are geared to young kids, especially during the early days of the system's life. As a result of concentrating on this market, Nintendo has achieved phenomenal success despite being criticized for not having more adult games. N64 games consistently appear on top-ten sales charts and many games like *Mario 64*, *Mario Kart 64* and *Diddy Kong Racing* have sold over one million units in a very short period of time. Nintendo is slowly developing more adult-oriented games but they will never abandon the young target market that has been so good to them and with games like *Twelve Tails: Conker 64* and *Pokemon*, they are sure to enjoy more success.

Sony has taken the opposite approach with the PlayStation. They locked up the older players from the start with games like *Resident Evil*, *WarHawk*, *Battle Arena Toshinden* and *Tomb Raider*. Sony and their third-party companies are now focusing efforts toward the younger consumer as explained by Sony VP of sales, Jack Tretton, "With upcoming games like *Spyro the Dragon* and *Crash 3* we should attract that younger consumer that I think is not untapped, but unmaximized for us." A number of other moves have been announced over the past few months that point to the shift in PlayStation's demographic. At the E³ Expo in May, Sony announced a publishing agreement with Disney Interactive. Sony will publish and distribute *A Bug's Life* and *Tarzan*, two titles that are targeted at kids. Tretton also revealed that Sony and THQ have signed an agreement that will have them co-market THQ's upcoming *Rugrats* game. Third-party developers like Psygnosis have followed Sony's lead with recent releases like *Spice World*, *Rascal* and *Rosco McQueen*.



Tommy" from Nickelodeon's "Rugrats.'

NewKidCo is best known for developing software titles for young children. They believe the PlayStation market is wide open and come this November they plan to launch two Sesame Street games for PlayStation aimed at preschoolers. NewKidCo president Hank Kaplan explained, "With the tremendous popularity of the Sesame Street property combined with Sony's initiative to provide PlayStation entertainment to a younger demographic, we are confident that this new line of titles will be tremendously received by parents and children alike."

Adult oriented and violent games are popular, there's no disputing that, but having a well-rounded line-up of software that appeals to both young and old is becoming the new standard for large publishers. **GW**

U.S. Government Puts Taiwan on Notice

By Ben Rinaldi

According to the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), Taiwan has been guilty of looking the other way when it comes to piracy of computer and videogame software. Recently, the U.S. Trade Representative agreed and placed Taiwan on the "Special 301" list. The 301 list is the tool used by the U.S. government to highlight countries who do not provide adequate protection of intellectual property rights of U.S. content industries.

President of the IDSA, Douglas Lowenstein, commented, "The U.S. government has had an on going dialogue with the Taiwanese on violations of intellectual property rights for years. But these talks have not resulted in sufficient, concrete, measurable actions. The Taiwanese have made some progress, but a sustained and effective enforcement regime is still lacking, and until one is in place, Taiwan will be under the microscope."

According to figures given by U.S. officials Taiwan was responsible for more than $102.6 million in losses in 1997 due to the illegal manufacturing and exporting of videogame cartridges and console and PC CDs. The next move is up to the Taiwanese government. If no action is taken to crack down on piracy, harsher actions are expected against Taiwan. **GW**

Hastings Entertainment Plans 54 New Stores By New Millennium

Reilly Brennan

Multimedia software retailer, Hastings Entertainment, Inc. is a relative newcomer in the industry having opened its first superstore in 1991. In a short period of time the company is seeing phenomenal growth, so much so that they recently announced plans to add 54 new stores to their existing 123 by the year 2000. Six new stores have opened in the second quarter of fiscal 1998 with another six planned by year's end.

The accelerated growth is due to a number of factors as explained by John Marmaduke, chairman and CEO at Hastings, "A key reason we decided to accelerate our store expansion program is the success we've exhibited with our proprietary system for information, purchasing, distribution and inventory controls that took four years and approximately $13 million to develop and implement."

Hastings superstores offer an extensive product line of music, PC software, console software, videotapes and videogame rentals. **GW**

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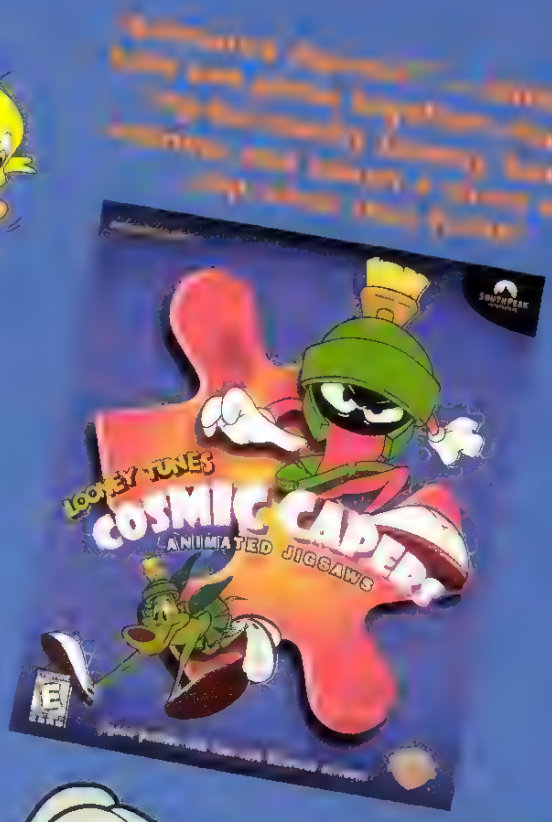

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The Next 20 Years: An Interview with Ramano Rao

By Marshal M. Rosenthal

Back in New York, having someone "predict" the future for you didn't take more than popping into a storefront on 8th Avenue and plunking down two bucks to have your palm read. The Ziff-Davis sponsored "The Next 20 Years" lecture series is a bit more precise - bringing the best and brightest "futuroligists" on a road trip to such cities as New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. It's a chance to dig into the depths of where our humanity is heading as technology embeds itself into every inch of our lives, and what makes it interesting to us in the gaming world is to find out what the "big thinkers" foretell as happening to the gaming community.

So it becomes a rare opportunity to speak with someone of the stature of Ramano Rao of Inxight. A graduate of MIT, he has authored and co-authored nearly 20 patents and is the co-inventor of the "Hyperbolic Tree" and the "Table Lens" (two novel techniques for interacting with large amounts of information in a wide range of applications). He has spent 10 years at Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center (PARC) building systems and publishing research in a variety of areas including information visualization, intelligent information access, paper user interfaces, document imaging, object-oriented programming, reflection, and window systems. As a founding member and chief technology officer for Inxight (which was established by Xerox in Palo Alto, California in 1996 with a mission to capitalize on breakthrough user interface, linguistic, and information access technologies invented and developed at PARC and Xerox Research Center Europe (XRCE) in Grenoble, France), Rao leads the engineering organization in its charge to build products based on Xerox's research in next-generation user interface and natural language technologies.

GW: First, how do you see the work that was done back at PARC as having influenced the history of electronic gaming?

RR: Regarding the history, there are a few things that I had direct experience with which I believe were very early computer games. On the Alto [we] ran 3 particular games which in many ways were bare bone instances of much broader genres at this stage. *Asteroids*, my guess was the first implementation of shooting things coming at/after you, since the Alto was the first bitmap display personal machine. A triangular gun site sat in the middle of the string and asteroids came flying toward it. The user could pivot it and fire using the keyboard keys. There was also *Mazeware* and *Trek* - two networked multi user games. *Mazewar* was a maze from the perspective of being in it using line drawings, and the people were represented by eyeballs. You could move a cell at a time in the maze, turn, peek around the corner. You could see others and tell how far they were and where they were facing, etc. because of the size and direction of the eyeballs. I remember that there was a guy named Andy Daniels who knew the game so well that he knew how to avoid being killed ever, by moving out of the cell you were shot in, within the tick you were shot, so the program would consider you hit. At the PARC 20th anniversary, lots of family, friends and others played *Mazewar* and I remember Andy sweeping through the game, just killing everybody, never being killed, until he was tired of it. *Trek* meanwhile was based on Star Trek and was much much more sophisticated. I don't think there's a need to describe it since you guys are a whole lot more knowledgeable than me anyway (grin). But let me add this comment: Xerox gave networks of Altos to several universities, including MIT. I'm sure young computer scientists were exposed to these early games during those late college student hours. My guess is some threads may go back to this.

Ramano Rao

GW: What can you tell us about the Natural Language technologies you are working on?

RR: Getting machines to understand language is a very hard problem and it's sometimes painted in science fiction-ish terms. But some parts of it have been "cracked" and by using those parts well we can make many systems and applications more effective and usable by humans. In particular, our stuff is about recognizing that language is made of words and phrases and sentences and concepts, not ascii bytes. So if you type "White House" without any special syntax into a search engine (like Infoseek) - the "hits' you'll get back are what you as a human would expect. That's because Infoseek incorporates our word and phrase tools in their indexing process. Realizing that "White House" is a noun phrase, and seeing it occur frequently, are enough for Infoseek to put the phrase into their index so that you get this when you ask for it.

GW: So is there a future for natural language interfaces to impact on the gaming field then?

RR: Hmm.... Fantasy games - where it is about dialogue between humans and electronic avatars or agents or interactive characters or whatever you might call them - is one area where language processing components would be useful (although probably not having much impact on those high-twitch boy games).

GW: So has gaming gone as far as it can with the current tech or are there new systems waiting out there?

RR: First, I'd note that gaming has much to teach business applications, because it [gaming] is ahead of information technology in utilizing technologies like 3D, animation, and sound to create an experience that leverages our human abilities. That's why some of these games can be so engaging. On further thought - and this is less about technology than it is about people - gaming may rise to a new level when it can engage a broader range of people, and that may indeed mean incorporating more of the kinds of things which keep scientists, writers, strategists, analysts, scholars, and knowledge workers in general engaged: resulting in games that are incorporating interesting information into rich interactions.

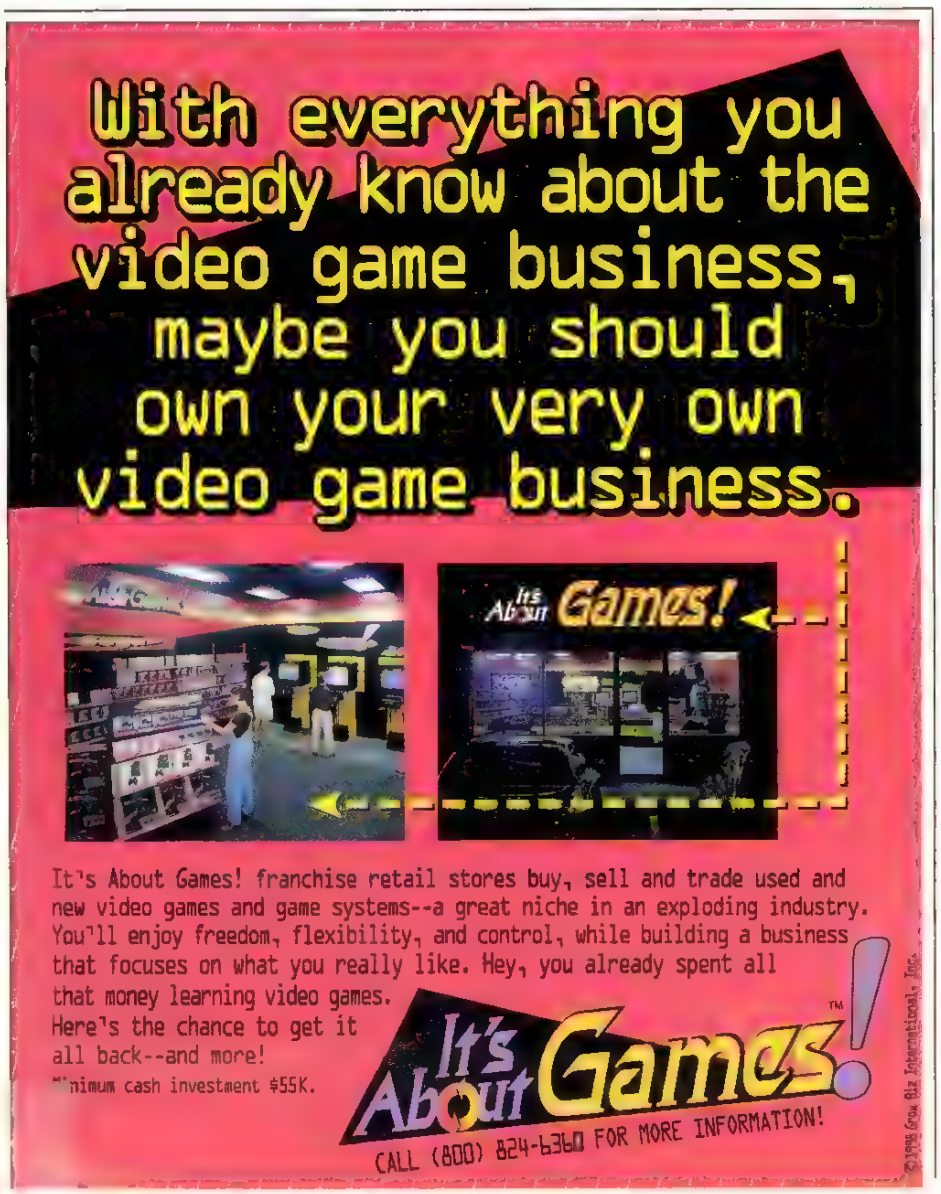
GW: So gaming won't be improved by technology so much as by....

RR: ...Education and the breakdown of the boundary between it and entertainment. I really don't believe people want to be couch potatoes or slaves to brain rot machines. Beyond those games relying on reaction and physical actions (and no judgment is meant on these), there can be games of learning, exploring, knowing, and growing intellectually.

GW: Wouldn't that point towards the Internet as a "gatherer" of people who could interact with each other in a gaming community?

RR: I think that's what's exciting about the Internet - it engages and encourages engagement with others directly. Any public event with a few speaking to the many can't naturally achieve that same level of event participation. But because "The Next 20 Years" is about the future and about looking quite far out, it inherently can draw people into thinking about these questions themselves. And once they are thinking about the future, many will start thinking about what kind of future they would like to see and what that might suggest about how they should apply their attention.

20 years is the space between generations, and so it makes you think about what life will be like for our children when they are adults. It creates for me an enormous sense of immediate and personal responsibility for the future. Technology for some evokes unbridled optimism, for others deep cynicism. Myself, I think it is a matter of what we make of it, because not all of its possibilities can be exercised at once. So I think it's well worth thinking about what do we want to do with the stuff and what value would that have to our lives and those that follow us. **GW**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Adrenalin Signs Distribution Agreement With Simon & Schuster

By Ben Rinaldi

Adrenalin Interactive has signed an exclusive three year publishing and distribution agreement with Simon & Schuster Interactive. The agreement calls for Simon & Schuster to distribute Adrenalin's *The Pink Panther; Hocus Pokus Pink* in the U.S., Australia and Canada. Financial terms were not disclosed but Adrenalin will receive an advance royalty check prior to the release of the game in the fall.

Simon & Schuster's strength in distribution resources was key to Adrenalin as explained by their chairman and CEO Jay Smith, "We are very excited to have one of the leading entertainment companies supporting our product. We are looking forward to a long and successful partnership with Simon & Schuster Interactive." **GW**

First Information of *NeoGeo Pocket* Emerge

By Ben Rinaldi

SNK Corporation is preparing to enter the handheld market dominated by Nintendo and Game Boy. Launching this October in Japan, the *NeoGeo Pocket* will be released just in time to go head-to-head with the new *Game Boy Color* which launches in September. Many agree that the *Game Boy Color* will be run-away hit and going up against Nintendo will be a formidable task for SNK. Despite not being in color, the company believes the *NeoGeo Pocket* has enough unique characteristics to succeed.

The 16-bit *NeoGeo Pocket* has new features never before seen in a handheld. Instead of using a directional pad it uses a Joystick lever that allows full 360 degree rotation. It will include built-in functions such as a calendar, a world clock, an alarm timer and a horoscope. Furthermore, its built-in Clock function allows time to pass even after the system has been shut down. But the one feature SNK is heavily relying on is the compatibility with Sega's Dreamcast. Using a special adapter that is sold separately game information can be shared between the two systems. The ability to create new games and collect data from your Dreamcast game and transfer it so you can play on your *NeoGeo Pocket* opens up endless gameplay possibilities.

The system is set to launch with eight SNK games but no announcements have been made concerning third-party support. If it takes off (and that's a big "if") software support will come from many of the big name players in the videogame industry. When it is released in mid-1999, the expected selling price will be $69-$79 with software costing between $30-$40. **GW**

Activision Plans *Vigilante 8* For N64 and *Sin*-ful Mission Pack for PC

By Jennifer Klinger

Nintendo 64 owners have watched as PlayStation owners gleefully enjoyed blowing each other up in vehicular combat games like *Vigilante 8*. Thanks to Activision's announcement that they will release *Vigilante 8* for N64, they no longer have to sit on the sidelines and watch. One of this summer's more popular games on PlayStation, the explosive auto combat game rumbles toward Nintendo's system with more of everything. Thanks to the N64's power, Activision promises more explosive

Vigilante 8

graphics, faster gameplay and four-player action exclusive to N64. Activision gave no firm release date but did state that a winter release is likely.

"Since its launch on June 1, 1998, *Vigilante 8* has revved up PlayStations worldwide and set a new gold standard for the car combat genre," said Activision senior VP Alan Gershenfeld. "Now we are taking the franchise to an all-new level by releasing the first game of its kind on the N64."

Sin

Activision also announced an agreement with developer 2015 Inc. to create the first mission pack for Ritual Entertainment's *Sin*. The official add-on will be published by Activision and will feature 13 new levels, a newly created storyline and all-new weapons and monsters. The goal is to expand on the characters and add more dynamic story elements to the popular first-person shooter. The *Sin* mission-pack will be the first release for 2015, however they are no strangers to the game industry and were chosen for their "dynamic style, unique ideas and commitment" to make the *Sin* add-on a top-notch product. Tom Kudirka, president and founder of 2015 explains, "Once people get their hands on *Sin*, they'll definitely want to extend the experience. We hope to deliver more of the same great gameplay and adventure with the addition of exciting twists and surprises." **GW**

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Hollywood and the Web

By Marshal M. Rosenthal

The recent Red Herring / Hollywood event in Santa Monica was a place to exchange ideas and listen to the "movers and shakers" expound on where they see the still somewhat "platonic" marriage of the Internet and Hollywood going. The focus seemed to be less on the technology and more on how companies could continue to grow their "brand" online, and one of the hottest topics was that of copyright protection and how to keep intellectual content from being appropriated and misused. While technologies like Liquid Audio are already in place to allow a consumer to download music (while maintaining the integrity of the owner's copyright), most of the Hollywood companies seem to feel that placing high quality representations of their "brand" online will result in piracy and financial loss.

One of the exhibitors at the conference, Online Monitoring Services, is addressing this concern with a proprietary technology that continuously monitors the Internet for clients, pinpointing any sites misusing the clients' intellectual property (sites are ranked based on their greatest potential business impact to the client, such as copyright and trademark violations, video, graphics, etc.). This protection bridges the wide range of ways that intellectual property can be misappropriated and then found on the internet - such as through hardcopy scans, television, radio, among others (as an example, OMS finds sites that pirate media client's content, including full length songs and full length unreleased movies.). Brandy Thomas, CEO and Chairman, says that a major obstacle to those in Hollywood placing their best content on the internet is a financial one: "There's money to be made on the Web, and if the studios and other entertainment companies aren't capitalizing on it, someone else will (and probably already is)," he says. The bottom line, according to Thomas, is that a company's content is out there in mass circulation on the Internet regardless of whether they put it on their own Web site or not, and so two tremendous issues must be faced: that of exposure and opportunity loss.

Screen shot from the Superfro game on line at www.toyota.com

OMS estimates that major media companies leave between $25MM and $50MM on the table each year because they fail to maximize their licensing opportunities on the Internet. "This money is not a pipe dream," says Thomas, "ASCAP and BMI have already announced that they will collect this money." OMS also calculates that companies risk tens of millions of dollars by allowing other to use and permutate their property and logos without authorization. "There was an article in *Fortune* that said Mario of Nintendo was worth $250 million to the company," says Thomas. "What about Bugs Bunny or Mickey Mouse?" And with bandwidth increasing, OMS sees the need for companies to be ever more diligent t about protecting their content - music, videos, graphics and text - and make sure that the online profits come in to them. However, not everybody is joining the copyright "party line": for example, C. Chris O'Hanion (C.E.O. of Spike, a large Australian strategic internet services company) who believes that the unprecedented growth of the internet as a medium will probably redefine, if not totally eradicate, the whole idea of copyright in the near future.

Another area of concern is how to move past a U.S.-centric approach online - after all, the web encompasses the world and there's no reason to think that only Americans should be targeted. Gordon Paddison, Director, Interactive Marketing, New Line Cinema, joined a panel in discussing how Hollywood could use the web to more effectively target the world-wide audience. "There's an addition to the 'cyclical' process we're used to," he begins, "where interest in a brand, such as a movie (take *Lost In Space* for example) flags down for a bit after the release and then picks up again when it's time for the video to come out." Paddison notes that extending the "brand" requires vigilance and attention - and that the World Wide Web means a world-wide audience. "When *Lost In Space* was released in Japan, for example, we (New Line Cinema) saw the hits for our web site increase - with a large percentage coming from this new market that was just now being exposed to the movie (or "brand.")." O'Hanion [Spike] points out that American companies might be a bit too myopic when it come to game culture and where their biggest markets might lie - not seeing how entertainment and commerce are intersecting the game "space" of new regions such as the Asian/Pacific Rim. O'Hanion: "That's where you can find big brands, such as Toyota, who are willing to experiment a little more with their online environments, using games to enhance their relationship with users and encourage frequent returns to the site." He also notes that even in these hard economic times, Asia is "getting" convergence a hell of a lot faster than the U.S, with movies-on-demand via broadband already commonplace in Hong Kong and Singapore Airlines offering games in economy class as an alternative to in-flight movies. Nor will it be long before a broadband-driven online gaming market begins to boom in Taiwan, Kuala Lumpur, and Tokyo. "If you want to see what a 21st century media company looks like," he says, "it's Sony- not Disney or Time-Warner."

The cast of "Lost in Space"

But the issue of broadband remains - and the fact that most of the States has yet to see the kind of internet connections that will emulate the T.V. experience of instant on and instant moving pictures. Progress is being made, and as demand grows, so too will the market and opportunity for the consuming public - "It worked with video, then cable, and this will too," says Rick Gibson, founder and Vice-Chairman of FeatureCast, Inc., an online content syndication company and the result of the recent merger of E-Ticket, Inc. and the Real Time Syndication Network. Gibson sees the increase in bandwidth as possessing "staggering capabilities and potential" once the broadband companies actually deliver as promised. He also believes that while the content providers won't jeopardize their rights or give content away for free, they'll find creative ways to protect their rights and build profit streams. "There is a need and a market and thus the opportunity to beef up the technology," says Gibson. "It will get done."

Allowing access to valuable intellectual property free of charge is an idea that lies at the heart of the Net (for example, both Netscape and Microsoft's web browsers are free as are many applications from other companies).

With so much content available through so many devices (PCs, set-top boxes, etc.), the real risk might be that the technology will overrun the already flimsy defenses of copyright. To paraphrase the paranoia of the Prisoner television show from the late '60s - "What are the original creators to do when their content is being aggregated, edited, degraded, redesigned, remixed, re-purposed, appropriated, and quoted, all without a single cent coming to them?" Solving this issue will prove more beneficial than the fastest modem connection, because this will "drive" Hollywood to treat the internet with the same respect it gives to its other entertainment outlets. **GW**

Activision Plans *Space Invaders 3D*

By Reilly Brennan

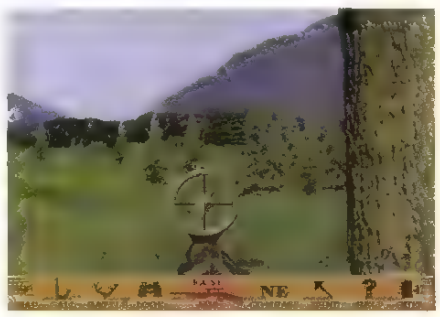
Activision has announced that they have acquired the rights to the arcade classic, *Space Invaders* from Taito Corporation. Following the formula of converting classic games to the third-dimension, Activision will update the eighties coin-op and bring it home on PC, PlayStation and Nintendo 64. Activision will distribute the title worldwide except for Japan, where it will be handled by Taito.

First introduced in 1978, *Space Invaders* has appeared on multiple platforms including arcade, Atari 2600, and Game Boy and according to Taito it has generated more than $500 million in revenues. Activision chairman and CEO, Robert Kotick hopes to squeeze a little more out of the old franchise saying, "*Space Invaders*' addictive, compelling play patterns made it one of the favorite titles of its time. By updating this classic with cutting-edge technology and explosive graphics and by maintaining the original's addictive gameplay, we believe that *Space Invaders* will appeal to those gamers who fondly remember it as the great after-school escape, as well as a whole new generation of players." **GW**

Microware Nabs Distribution Rights to *Deer Hunter*

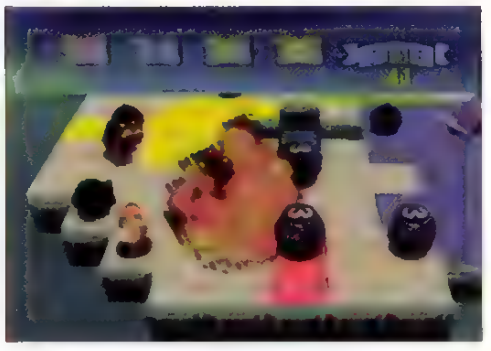
By Ben Rinaldi

Microware Distributing has acquired the worldwide licensing rights to *Deer Hunter*, the best-selling PC game from GT Interactive. Microware purchased the rights to use the name for a term of three years and intends to release home versions for Nintendo 64, PlayStation, and Game Boy Color.



Deer Hunter

Microware obviously feels there is a market for this kind of game on the home platform and with the success the game achieved on the PC, they're probably right. Why GT didn't port the game themselves remains a mystery. The thinking could be that hunting games only appeal to a certain segment of PC users but with proper positioning and marketing, *Deer Hunter* on PlayStation and Nintendo 64 has the potential to be a sure-fire hit. At any rate, Microware is very confident that the game will be a hit adding, "the platform game will be just as successful as its PC counterpart." **GW**



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Also New From N64:

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Knife Edge combines the fast-paced action of a sci-fi shoot-em-up with the thrilling joyride of an arcade-style flight game.

Coming November

Top Gear Overdrive, sequel to Top Gear Rally, allows players to impede their opponent's race while competing in various seasons and racing conditions.

Coming December

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Business

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EARLY EDITION — DAILY PLANET — FALL 1998

SUPERMAN™
ONLY GAME IN TOWN

HEADLINE STORY

▪Titus teams up with the Man of Steel to save Metropolis.

By RON TROUPE
Daily Planet Staff Writer

METROPOLIS — One of Europe's leading multi-platform developers, Titus Software, has obtained the license from DC Comics and Warner Bros. to produce the much anticipated *Superman Animated Series* video game, due for release this November.

A massive promotional push for the Superman game began last May at the E3 show in Atlanta, Georgia. You may recall the "newsies" that were hocking copies of *The Daily Planet*– Metropolis' very own newspaper. The paperboys were such a huge attraction, security had to be called in to control the massive crowds. This is just a taste of the Superman excitement that is in the works.

Further promotions include a Superman Limited Collector's Edition comic published by DC Comics, available only in the first shipment of games. This will generate a high initial demand for the game and assure high traffic of Superman fans at local retailers.

And regarding retailers, in-store promotional standees will be sure to attract Superman fans. The standees are fashioned after the *Superman Animated Series*, currently airing on the WB network's Kid's WB! channel.

Other promotions include a full-scale media blitz. To assure maximum exposure, the fall campaign will begin with a high-energy :30 second TV spot. This will be followed by several full spread print ads that will run consecutively in core gaming magazines, as well as mainstream publications.

The publicity continues at a grass roots level in malls and local gaming retailers. High-visibility in-store jumbo box displays and in-store videos promise to further raise the Superman fever to a frantic level.

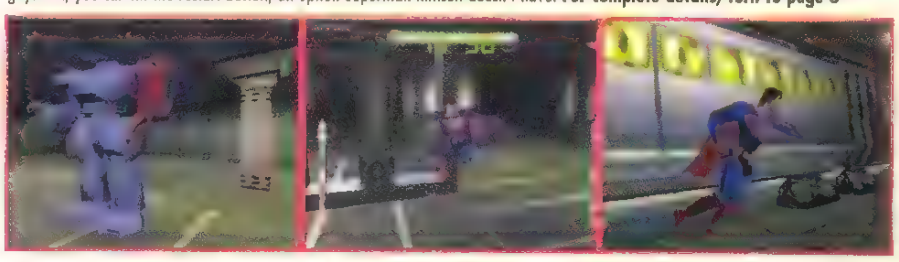
For gamers, one thing is certain: From now on, things in Metropolis will be out of this world.

PUBLIC NOTICE

DC Comics is offering a Collector's Edition Superman comic book that tells fans the behind-the-scenes events that lead up to the opening story of the Superman video game. This is sure to generate lots of excitement for video game and comic fans alike.

Photo Jimmy Olsen/Daily Planet Staff, 1998

AT THE TOP OF HIS GAME. You can't be Superman, but you can get his game. Titus releases the Superman video game in November. You'll have all the super-powers - Flight, Super Speed, Heat Vision, Super Breath and more. And the best part is, if the bad guys win, you can hit the restart button, an option Superman himself doesn't have. **For complete details, turn to page 3**



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DVD Gaming Takes Off at DVD Production 98

By Steve Traiman

"The DVD-ROM is the ultimate, endless gaming experience, offering mass storage for PC and consumer electronics entertainment." That's the message delivered by David Obelcz, Compaq software solutions technologist, to an overflow crowd or more than 300 at the first DVD Production '98 conference, co-sponsored by the International Recording Media Assn. (IRMA) and Miller Freeman PSN, Aug. 12-13 at the Universal City (CA) Hilton and Towers.

"The first games delivered on DVD-ROM just give a hint of the opportunities in this awesome gaming media," he adds. "The dollars the movie studios and game developers are leaving on the table by not looking at DVD-ROM are already staggering."

To emphasize his point, he offered recent industry statistics that indicate some 1.5 to 3 million "active gamers" are typically male; age 32; have an average annual income of $64,000; buy two to three PC games a month for a total of $1,200 a year; play 11 hours a week; and 80% have Internet access.

"Virtually all of these active gamers have a DVD-ROM drive now," he says. "When you add in the 29 to 31.5 million 'casual gamers,' many of whom anticipate getting a DVD drive in the next year, you have a lot of gamers who are demanding quality products, and are dying for compelling DVD titles."

As an active spokesman for Compaq, Obelcz told attendees he was at the conference for just one overriding reason. "I need compelling DVD content to help me sell more computers. Most will end up in gamer households, and both the PC and movie industries are largely ignoring the DVD market. If the DVD version of *Wing Commander IV* can cost as much as it did, and earn it back with the first 300,000 unit sales, then we've got a hell of a market. The Internet plus the PC plus DVD and strong content add up to a great experience for today's game enthusiast."

The expanding market for DVD-ROM was highlighted by Charles Van Horn, IRMA executive vice president, looking ahead to the year 2002 with figures based on IRMA's Worldwide Optical Media Intelligence Report.

- From an installed base of from 5 to 10 million U.S. households alone by year-end 1998, DVD-ROM drives will reach a cumulative installed worldwide base of 105 million drives by 2002.

- With some computer hardware firms expected to shift entirely from CD-ROM to DVD-ROM by the fourth quarter, DVD drives will be replacing CD-ROMs at a compound annual rate of 27%, starting next year.

- With DVD-ROM games, DVD Video movies and music titles, and anticipated DVD-Audio releases, replication of more than 1.28 billion DVD disks worldwide is forecast for 2002.

DVD production98

Authoring Digital Entertainment Media

Those forecasts certainly hold promise for the DVD-ROM game enthusiasts on other panels and presentations.

Mark Day started Daylight Productions earlier this year after five years with Electronic Arts, involved with such projects as *Wing Commander IV*, *Wing Commander Prophecy* and *Zork: Grand Inquisitor*.

"The DVD conversion for *WC IV* and *Zork* showed me some of the opportunities this expanded format offered," he told attendees at the "Technologies: What's Making It Work" panel. "While the first conversions included porting over the existing game and upgrading some assets, now we're starting to get into original development for new DVD games with a lot more creativity involved to make it a truly unique experience for the gamer.

> *"The dollars the movie studios and game developers are leaving on the table by not looking at DVD-ROM are already staggering."*
>
> - David Obelcz, Compaq software solutions technologist

"While DVD-ROM was primarily an OEM market to start, with a selected number of innovative games bundled with both internal drives and upgrade kits," he adds. "There's now a growing demand for retail releases. We saw a lot of promising previews at E^3 in Atlanta, and many of those will be in stores for the holidays or early next year to attract new DVD-ROM drive owners."

Mark Waldrep, founder and CEO of AIX Entertainment, was one of the first producers of Enhanced CDs, the forerunner of today's DVD Video music titles. His firm also handled the DVD *Dragon's Lair* project for Digital Leisure, expected in stores in October. "It's a node game with the player using the controller to move through 27 nodes and rescue the princess," he told the audience in his presentation on "Tapping the Full Entertainment Power of DVD: Investigations into New Creative Video Challenges."

Continuing on, he pointed out that the ratio of DVD-ROM drive sales to CD-ROMs is 10 to 1 this year, with 5 to 6 million installed households by year end, a forecast of as high as 35 to 50 million by the end of 1999. "With DVD, we now have a rapidly expanding audience for truly interactive video for the first time, not only for games but for music. We've already produced 20 DVD Video music titles with a 96KB sampling rate and 24-bit digital encoding, certainly state-of-the-art for today's market."

"Next year we should have as many as 1,500 DVD-ROM titles in the market, triple the 500 anticipated through year-end," Intel multimedia evangelist Greg Berkin notes in his presentation, "Unlocking the Power of DVD-ROM; Everything Today's DVD Producer Should Know." While these are relatively small numbers compared to an anticipated 5,000 DVD-Video movie and music releases in 1999, up from 2,000 by this December, he and Intel are excited about the gaming potential that will be maximized for the Pentium II family of chips.

"Our *Durango* project tested the retail readiness and availability of game content for the PC in DVD titles in development," he continues. "We tested over 60 'works in progress' earlier this year and found a large percentage 'retail ready' for release later this year."

Intel's forecast for DVD Video and DVD-ROM sales worldwide emphasized the bottom line opportunities for game developers. Estimated sales this year are $500 million, quadrupling to $2 billion in 1999 and zooming to as high as $8 billion by 2002. **GW**

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IRMA: DVD Replication To Hit 1.28 Billion Units By 2002

By Chris McGowan

The International Recording Media Association (IRMA) has released its "Optical Media Intelligence Report," which forecasts annual worldwide DVD replication of 1.28 billion disks by the year 2002, including all of DVD's formats (DVD-Video, DVD-ROM, DVD Audio, DVD-RAM, etc.). The numbers are part of a study on the growth and direction of the world optical media marketplace, which contains statistics on all current and emerging optical formats. According to IRMA Executive Vice President Charles Van Horn, "We are obviously in the audience-building stage of the DVD marketplace. Audiences are slow to change with the introduction of new technology. An educational process is always needed. Look at 2002 as only the beginning of the format's introduction to the consumer mass market." Even though it's only a "beginning," IRMA's statistics chart a rapid rise for DVD during the next four years as the format establishes a strong consumer niche for itself in video, ROM audio, and blank recordable applications.

The IRMA predicts that DVD-Video replication will increase from 40 million units in 1998 to 183 million units in North America by 2002, and from 64 million units this year to 430 million units worldwide by 2002. "Of course, DVD-Video is a rather small marketplace in comparison to VHS, but as the first true convergence entertainment product the potential, according to our statistics, is tremendous," Van Horn adds. According to IRMA statistics, consumers are embracing the format at a strong rate, with over 800,000 DVD-Video households this year in North America, which is expected to grow to 8.6 million households by the year 2002. The growth of retail outlets will also propel the demand for DVD-Video product, predicts the IRMA, which projects that the number of stores selling or renting the new format will increase from 5,000 outlets at the end of 1997 to more than 12,000 by the end of the year.

"Sensible retailing and marketing will make DVD more apparent to all consumers-not just early adopters-who are acquiring DVD-Video programs at an annual rate exceeding VHS sell-through buy rates, of 15-20 DVD-Videos versus 10-15 VHS videos," adds Van Horn. He encourages the Hollywood community to "emphasize the entertainment content and potential of DVD and not confuse the consumer audience with a technology story. In order to build the audience for DVD we must develop new and innovative programming that truly communicates the value of the new DVD format to its audience." **GW**

Tender Loving Care Launches On DVD

By Chris McGowan

Tender Loving Care, the world's first interactive movie for home viewing, has made its debut in the U.S. on DVD-ROM and CD-ROM. A provocative, psychological thriller based on a novel of the same name by Andrew Niederman *(Devil's Advocate)*, the title stars two-time Oscar nominee John Hurt. *TLC* was designed specifically to maximize the advantages of DVD technology while elevating CD-ROM to new heights, says its publisher, Ashland, Oregon-based Aftermath Media.

Unlike other self-described interactive movies that are actually games with video elements added or feature films with extra scenes and interviews, *TLC* is a motion picture that offers an enhanced entertainment experience through the use of numerous interactive elements, claims Aftermath. *TLC* is unprecedented in that the viewer's psyche is the director of this tale, affecting both character and plot developments. The viewer is drawn into a spiral of deception, power and sexual intrigue through Dr. Turner, a psychiatrist played by Hurt. He enlists the viewer's help in analyzing the story's characters-a beautiful, deluded patient, her dangerously unpredictable husband, and the mysterious, seductive psychiatric nurse who has arrived to provide what may, or may not be, *Tender Loving Care*. As the story progresses, the viewer can explore this cozy little household to gain knowledge about their hidden motivations. Likewise, Dr. Turner explores the viewer's secret desires and aversions through a series of probing psychological questions-and this determines how the story unfolds.

TLC was created by Aftermath Media's Rob Landeros, who co-created the landmark title *The 7th Guest*, and David Wheeler, with whom Landeros

John Hurt play Dr. Turner in "TLC"

collaborated on *The 11th Hour*. Having pushed the envelope of DVD technology, they now plan to use the Internet to its full potential as a retail channel, selling *TLC* directly to U.S. consumers via Aftermath's electronic storefront. *TLC* was released throughout Europe two months ago to excellent reviews and outstanding sales, says Aftermath. DVD-ROM and CD-ROM versions of *TLC* may be purchased at www.aftermathmedia.com for $45.00 plus shipping. A fully interactive DVD-Video version will be available this fall. A DVD-Video demo is available now for $5.00, which can be credited towards the full purchase price later. General and sales info: www.aftermathmedia.com. **GW**

Peripheral Vision

By Steve Traiman

APC Steps Up Power Protection For Real-Time Game Play

"With the dramatic increase in multimedia marketplaces, new electronic formats, real-time strategy gaming, and interactive publishing houses, today's computer gaming industry understands the necessity of reliable power protection," says Andrew Kallfelz, general manager for APC's Desktop Power Solutions Division.

"As power quality becomes less reliable and as UPS price points become more attractive, game users as well as interactive entertainment producers realize they can't afford to go without uninterruptible power protection.

"Power protection needs can vary significantly, therefore a 'cookie-cutter' approach to our product offering is not in the best interest of our customers," he adds. "The revamped Back-UPS line is the perfect approach to meet the power protection needs of the interactive computer gaming industry."

One of the newest APC units tailored for the active gamer with multiple peripherals is *Back-UPS Office*, introduced in June at $99 suggested retail price (SRP). It is available at $79 to $89 at such outlets as Best Buy, CompUSA, Computer Discount Warehouse, Fry's Electronics, Insight, Microcenter, MicroWarehouse and Office Max.

The compact unit provides full surge protection for a maximum 280 VA/watts for up to six outlets and fax/modem lines, with battery power supplied for 7 to 13 minutes for three outlets. An intermittent alarm alerts the gamer when connected equipment is running on battery, giving gamers ample time to close down their action without losing any vital scoring information or online competition activity. As with all other APC units, the new model comes with a $25,000 lifetime warranty including lightning strike protection for all properly connected equipment.

For higher capacity surge needs, the revamped *Back UPS Pro* line offers a step-up series of models, starting with the Pro 280 (maximum 280 VA/watts) at $179.99; Pro 420 (420 VA/watts) at $299.99; Pro 650 (650 VA/watts) at $379.99; Pro 1000 (1,000 VA/watts) at $589.99; and the Pro 1,400 ($1,400 VA/watts) at $759.99. Chain-specific discounts and rebates are being offered, with CompUSA recently promoting the *Pro 420* at a discounted $249.99 plus a $50 mail-in rebate for final cost of $199.99.

CH Products Offers First USB joysticks for iMac

For Apple's hot new iMac computer, CH Products is introducing a line of hybrid USB joysticks based on the current product line. Starting with the *GameStick 3D*, expected in stores in early October, the joysticks will be compatible with the iMac and all PC systems.

A CD provided with the joystick will enable the user to load drivers for compatibility with the Mac or PC operating systems. In either operating system, the joystick will be completely programmable.

The *GameStick 3D*, with an expected street price of $49.95, has eight programmable button functions (4 buttons and a POV hat switch), a third twist axis and a throttle. The programmable option to the gamer is a great bonus, since it can be used with first person shooters, flight sims, driving and motorcycle games, and space combat games. The twist axis and multiple programmable buttons are particularly useful for the first person shooters.

"Once we get this *GameStick 3D* finalized, we are going to work on other USB products," says Greg Stearns, CH Products CEO. "These include a USB steering wheel, flight yoke, and other versions of joysticks including our *FlightStick Pro*, with at least one ready for the holidays."

With Apple reporting the largest first-week order for any new product for the iMac, with 150,000 units at suggested $1,299 retail, the outlook is good for the peripheral market. "If the iMac popularity holds up as it appears to be doing, and with an expanding number of Mac games announced for all genres, a certain percentage of those buyers will look for hot USB game controllers," Stearns says.

Among the first retailers expected to feature the hybrid *GameStick 3D* are Best Buy, Electronic Boutique, Fry's, J&R Computer World and MicroCenter, according to Stearns. **GW**

Contributions to Peripheral Vision are welcomed. Deadline is five weeks prior to issue date, Sept. 10 for the next Oct. 15 column. Information goes to contributing editor Steve Traiman, phone/fax 201-265-4354, e-mail straiman@mindspring.com. Artwork goes to managing editor Reilly Brennan at GameWEEK headquarters, 64 Danbury Rd., Suite 500, Wilton, CT 06897, phone/fax 203-761-6150, or digital images can go e-mail to reilly@gameweek.com.

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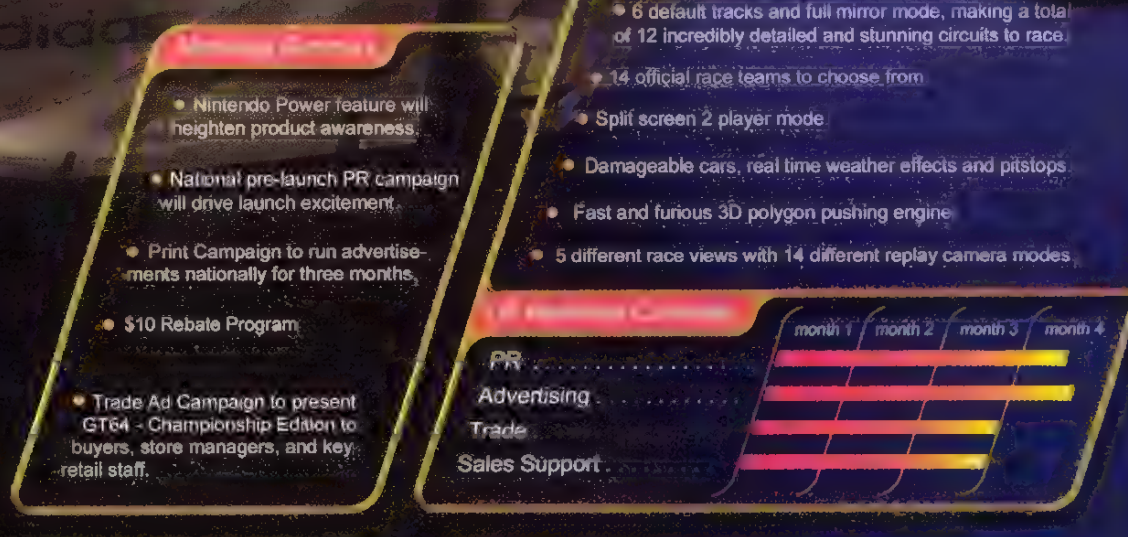

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Developers' Corner

Where Hath All the RPG's Gone?

By Joe Sislow

Greetings, good readers! In recent years, one of the more successful genres of game - the role-playing game (RPG) - has seemed to be harder and harder to find. For a while, Computer Gaming World's charts had only four RPG's listed on their top ten RPG list. It was mostly due to the fact that there haven't been nearly as many successful RPG's made as there used to be (oh, those darn "Good Ole' Days"...). This issue, we're going to figure out if the RPG is going the way of the dodo. I have a few speculations as to why the atmosphere has changed, and I hope to ruffle a few people to not doom what is my favorite genre of game!

Ye Good Ole' Days

Back in the early days of microcomputing, RPG's were at their peak. Many large companies today such as Sir-Tech, Origin, and even Electronic Arts can thank their success to RPG's. Sir-Tech and Origin are still riding *Wizardry* and *Ultima* (respectively) today, but Electronic Arts has moved away from their hit titles such as *Autoduel*, *Starflight*, and the classic *Bard's Tale* series. Why the switch?

In those days, graphics and sound weren't a valued commodity. Most games were happy with four colors and beeps for sound. With such restrictions on the technology, the guts of the game had to be pretty impressive. These early games relied on other things to lure the player, and even at such an early time, game developers felt the pull of world creation. In order to create a world, action was often traded for play depth and resource allocation. Dungeons, albeit turn-based, could have much more variety if the programmer elected for that trade off. So we had large worlds with simple maps and dungeons. Tiling of maps was used to conserve valuable memory. All of these technical things made it a prime time to develop RPG's. And so they did.

In addition to the technology promoting such games, the audience was also much more technical. As such, they were more prone to be into far more involving games. Programmers and hobbyists tend to be into pen and paper RPG's and wargames. I'm not sure where this correlation comes from, but it is a real one. The computer user of the early years had the skill and dedication to want such deep, complex games as RPG's provide. Thus, the market was prime for this game, as well as the technology.

One other factor was the lack of structure in the industry. Often times one person was creating the games. The allure of the computer dream - walking into a company with a completed game and becoming a millionaire on the spot - was encouraging many of the country's best and brightest to make interesting games. At Mindscape I heard the story of Chris Gray walking in with *Infiltrator* and becoming an instant rich man. Stories such as this coupled with the autonomy of single-person development allowed the programmers to create whatever they were into. Thus, with the correlation of programmers and RPG's/wargames, we saw many RPG's in the early years.

For the consoles, the RPG's became popular in Japan. However, the Japanese RPG has some substantial differences from the traditional computer RPG. Many companies made their living by bringing over the best of the Japanese RPG's. Companies like SquareSoft showed that some RPG's could be done well on the consoles.

The Market Today

So what's changed to make it hard for one of the most popular genre of games to succeed? Well, we can start with the technology. With the advent of CD-ROM, the destruction of the 640k barrier, the Internet and connectivity, and the progress of graphics technology, the time would seem perfect to make the ultimate RPG, no? Some people share these thoughts, but it would seem that many of them did not realize the daunting task ahead.

Technologically, more attention has to be paid to the complexities of the technology. Sure, it took some wrangling to get sprite engines to work well, but 3D technology puts the work behind most 2D technology to shame. If a programmer has to develop a game as well as a complex graphics engine, then the development time is doubled. Add Internet/multiplayer support, and you've got triple the work. Given the fact that RPG's tend to require more design and programming for the game side, it's no wonder that the amount of companies willing to take the chance has dwindled.

Speaking of those companies, the face of development has changed from a single-person operation to large teams. With companies there are many more concerns than merely what the team wants to do. Development time, development cost, and fiscal year responsibilities (not to mention stock for a public company) all contribute to the idea that massive tasks are seen as much more risky than they used to be. Only the most ambitious companies can take the chance on making an RPG that takes advantage of the technology. They've got market issues to worry about that reach far beyond the simple desires of the programmer or designer.

The market has changed as well. What used to be a small, niche market has begun to grow into the mainstream. Games such as *Myst*, *Carmen Sandiego*, and *Deer Hunter* have shown that the market for less than traditional audiences can be highly profitable. This marketing aims at much more of a mass market than the previous closed audience. And thus, the companies have a harder time justifying RPG's when easier, safer, and cheaper development issues make more financial sense.

The console companies have been soured on bringing Japanese RPG's to the US because of the work required to change the game. Translation is not an easy thing, and the differences in the game also make the conversion difficult. Many attempts have been less than successful, due to cultural or business issues, so many of the games don't get released here.

The Oracle Speaks...

So are RPG's doomed? Is the RPG fan forced to adapt to different games? Am I showing my age by writing this column? Well, it would seem that the trend will continue to some degree. Companies like Origin have shown how difficult the large scale RPG projects are to complete. *Ultima Online* is one of the most ambitious projects attempted to date, and the numbers won't be in for quite a while.

So where will these games come from if not from the large companies? Sure the occasional resurgence or title *(Fallout)* will come forward, but I believe that the largest trend of RPG's will come from the shareware market. Many of these companies don't have the ability to compete on the technology field with the large developers/publishers, so they must make their games superior with gameplay and game design. RPG's seem like the perfect market for this. Companies that cannot compete technologically will learn to compete with clever programming, good gameplay, and a proper understanding of a niche market. RPG's are perfect for those criteria, and the genre is just waiting for the right shareware group to revolutionize it all.

In addition, the console trend seems to be towards merging the development systems with the PC's, allowing for shareware companies to amortize their costs with easy ports to consoles. The console players are looking for RPG's as much as the PC players. With such numbers in both market, the possibility for profit crossing platforms is quite large.

The danger lies in too many companies attempting ambitious projects right off the bat. RPG's probably have the lowest completion rate of any game developed. This failure is caused by the difficulty in developing such complex games. Small developers should be aware of the time and resource commitments required to complete RPG's. Overall, I feel that enough will succeed to make RPG's into the independent market for gaming.

In closing, we find RPG's in a truly dire situation. The mass audience may not appreciate them, the business community may find them too risky, and the technology may make them too costly. It will be through the design of clever games that utilize technology efficiently that the RPG market will have its chance to be reborn. Since I am a big RPG fan, I hope to see the day where we have independent gaming festivals that feature RPG's prominently. I'm expecting big things from you shareware developers out there, so let's get to work! In the meantime, keep playing! **GW**

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PlayStation

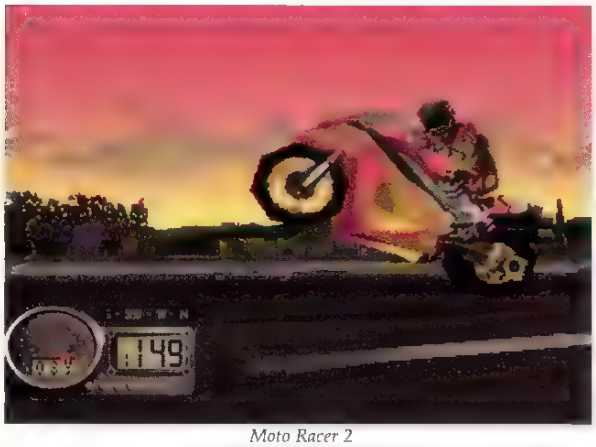
NINTENDO64

Interviewing the Big Guys, Part III

By Glenn Rubenstein

Electronic Arts

Forget Sony or Nintendo - if there is one company everyone is watching, it is Electronic Arts. Back in the day you had groups of programmers saying, "We want our company to be a strong developer - like Electronic Arts." Then it was software companies saying, "We want our company to be a strong publisher of our own products and other developer's games - like Electronic Arts." After that all the publishers were saying, "You know, we want to have original games, and a strong sports line-up - like Electronic Arts." And now every publisher (who has likely spread themselves thin to emulate EA's genre spanning line-up) is saying, "we see ourselves becoming one of the industry's major players - like Electronic Arts."



Moto Racer 2

In terms of software EA is even bigger than Nintendo and Sony, but unlike those two they do not manufacture a console, although they can be traced in an odd way as a quasi-first party developer for the 3DO. In fact, every company sees them as their competition in some way or another, and the games they create are nothing to take lightly. From their top selling sports titles, to their innovative PC games, to their racing games, to their simulations, etc. - almost everything they publish has a major presence in the industry.

Getting right down to it, we decided to get as in depth as possible with Bing Gordon, EA's chief creative officer, to find out what makes them so successful, and how they plan to stave off the multitude of companies that are out gunning for their market share.

GW: What do you see as the current status of Electronic Arts in the interactive entertainment industry?

BG: A leader.

GW: How have you seen the company grow in the last five years?

BG: Our growth continues to outpace the growth of the market. I would attribute the growth to culture, the creative partnership between the business and publishing elements and the creative and product development elements. It is a pretty effective partnership and a culture that supports decentralized ownership, small group ownership, and effectively connects the various small groups and labels together into a whole.

GW: Just about every company we interviewed said they saw Electronic Arts as their competition - what companies do you see as your competition?

BG: Sony, Nintendo, and Microsoft are our primary competition.

GW: What do you see as your key software titles for this Christmas season?

BG: The ones that are new for us are *Knockout Kings* boxing, that's a big deal, *Ultima Online*, we have a gold version of that coming out this fall. We have a World War II simulation that is all new and extremely cool. *Alpha Centauri* is completely new and cool. *SimCity* has a long tradition and we have lots of our big creative and technical guns behind it. And we are currently creating EA Sports titles for the N64, which is new and exciting for us. Those are our primary cool, new things.

We are known for a kind of disciplined, sustained support of properties like *FIFA Soccer* and *Madden Football*, *NHL Hockey*, *Need for Speed*, *Road Rash*, and *Triple Play*. We've got about 18 or 20 titles there. The ones that I think generate the most excitement compared to previous years are *Madden Football* on all formats, *NBA Live* on all formats is pretty astonishing, *Need for Speed III* on the PC is greatly improved, and *Populous: In The Beginning* has really cool improvements. Those are kind of the highlights.

Knockout Kings

GW: How do you see the contrast dealing between EA Sports and your other franchise titles, along with the new, somewhat original properties?

BG: I see it as kind of new versus different franchises — it is kind of a different creative mindset for each. Most of the franchises, especially sports have a time frame, so we race against the clock with them. Then with something like NASCAR there is a different kind of rhythm with internal support from the organization in terms of naming them, etc. There's a little bit more opening night jitters on the all new titles.

Madden NFL 99

GW: A lot of companies are complaining about how much it costs to develop and market a successful, "hit" game. What do you think about how these costs have escalated? How do you deal with it?

BG: For the 16-bit and the 32-bit systems, we have always felt kind of defensive and challenged by the amount of spending the first party companies and some third party companies are willing to do to chase business. And I think we continue to try to look for discipline in our spending. We eventually did our first $10 million project sometime around 1994. I think that, like in all media businesses, as time goes by there is more of a focus on spending and we are better on some projects than others. Of course the focus is always on getting from point A to point B.

> *"I firmly believe there will be a number of changes over the next five years. I believe there will be five to seven publishers worldwide who will control the business, like in music and movies."*
>
> - Bing Gordon, Electronic Art's chief creative officer

GW: What do you think of the current platforms that you develop on?

BG: They are better than the last generation. We are at a point now that we are in a five year cycle of platform development. A few years before the platform comes out our development people look at what's planned and say "oh wow, that's the next big cool thing" and they get excited about developing for it, but at the same time we are depressed about the state of (the system's) development tools. Then the year of ship we are kind of proud of what we accomplish and frustrated with schedules because it is hard to get the first generation stuff out when you want to. Then in year two through four it feels less creative and upbeat and optimistic, and there is more craftsmanship and then there is kind of a challenge in the last third of the lifecycle trying to figure out how to do things that are new. I think our people are now in that craftsmanship period and for us I think we are a little further along the cycle on PlayStation than N64. For most of the N64 titles this is the first time we are coming out with them, so they have some of that upbeat, new and fresh feeling. I think that is how we feel about the 3D cards for the PC as well.

GW: What do you think about the differences between dealing with the PC and the "next generation" console systems?

BG: In terms of development I think our programmers have grown up over the last ten years using memory as a way to improve performance. Smart use of memory and secondarily smart use of multi-processors, but first is smart use of memory. And, we just have a lot more memory available on PCs. Right now the memory on the current generation of consoles feels like a bottleneck. Our programmers are used to the last generation of consoles where they were able to write code right to the metal. They can't do that now and it feels like a restraint. As far as the platforms themselves it looks like there are three that are healthy and that feels like the right number. I'd say our developers were hoping there would be more cross platform opportunities than there are. The market seems positive and we are all hopeful that Sony will sell as many PlayStations over the next few years as they are promising.

GW: What do you think about Sega reentering the console marketplace with the Dreamcast?

BG: I think it is exciting. Electronic Arts has had a great part of our company history in support of the key Sega plat-

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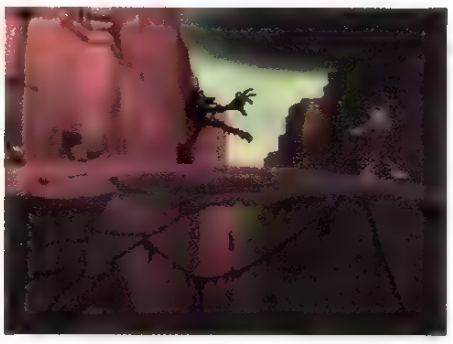
forms, so there is kind of a tradition there. I love the price performance they are talking about with the Dreamcast — again, a lot of memory and the next generation processing in 3D at a consumer price point. That's really cool. We wish them the best over the next 6-12 months, but clearly they will have a big challenge.

GW: And lastly, where do you see the industry headed right now?

BG: I think we are in a normal cycle. The consoles are sort of in the meat of their cycle — still cycling up. The PC business is entering transition as far as entertainment is going, maybe into two different formats — one Internet and one mass market as it gets cheaper. The PC and the consoles tend to move in 5 year cycles. I firmly believe there will be a number of changes over the next five years. I believe there will be five to seven publishers worldwide who will control the business, like in music and movies. Of course EA's goal is to be one of those companies.

Another area in which the industry is headed, as it takes its place in the traditional entertainment industry as an equal partner over the next 10 years, is that products will have increased longevity. In every one of the other businesses, great products last for a very long time but we still find it hard to get lasting revenue out of our products. There is a lot of churning going on although the PC business lifecycles are starting to extend now.

In terms of people, for the first time they are coming in from the university level and have taken courses in computer graphics basically preparing them to be game designers. In past years we have basically had products built by self



Heart of Darkness

taught people learning in the school of hard knocks and I think we are about to go to phase three of people who are trained to come in and tackle the creative aspects of the business.

Interplay

Over the past ten years, Interplay has gone from being a solid yet small software developer to a top publisher of computer and console games. It's quite amazing, and they've overcome a lot of obstacles on their road to success. Recently the company went public, and now they further look to increase their position in the marketplace by beefing up their console offerings, and continuing to do what has worked so well for them on the PC. We sat down with Brian Fargo, Interplay's founder & CEO, to find out where Interplay is heading.

GW: What is the current status of Interplay in the marketplace?

BF: I think the first thing is now that we are a public company we have a chance to get off the sidelines and be a lot more competitive than we have ever been in the past. And, secondly I think you are starting to see the transformation of Interplay from being a PC company to now becoming a console company as well. Our roots were very much PC based in the past and with some consoles efforts we have had success. Now though you'll see us becoming more of a console company.

GW: What do you see as the differences between the PC and console marketplaces?

BF: There is a significant amount of difference between the PC and console business. There is a difference in terms of philosophically, how you build and market titles even down to the price point where a $5 dollar price shift can make a huge difference on the console side and have virtually no impact on the PC side. For the same reason if you look at the top 20 titles on consoles and the top 20 titles on the PC each year, how many overlap? Maybe one or two at the most and that alone points to what a different marketplace each is.

GW: With that in mind, what do you see as the current platforms you are interested in developing on?

BF: Currently they are the PC, the Sony PlayStation, and then Dreamcast.

GW: What do you think about the Dreamcast? How successful do you think Sega can be re-entering the market at this point?

BF: I'm glad to see Sega re-enter the market. They were always a very exciting force. The Sega commercials were always brilliant and they had great titles. They unfortunately stumbled when it came to the Saturn, but I am glad to see them getting back into it.

GW: What are your key titles for this Christmas season?

BF: *Baldur's Gate* is clearly going to be a key title for Interplay for this Christmas. It has lots of consumer awareness behind it so we fully expect it to be a success. Then on the console side of the business both *Wild 9* and *Heart of Darkness* are two key titles. Also on the PC side the sequel to *Fallout* is a very important title.

GW: What do you have planned for the sales and marketing behind each of these titles?

BF: For the console titles we will be going to television for both, and for the

Fallout 2

PC titles we have been running advertising for six months to a full year, so there has been tremendous print support and we will also be doing a lot of in-store promotion for all of these titles.

GW: Speaking of television, how have you seen the costs rise in developing, marketing, and advertising a game? Do you think the cost for "hit" game has gotten out of hand?

BF: I think that the development costs have somewhat stabilized over the last year or so, I don't see those as spiraling out of control, but I do see the marketing costs as spiraling out of control — totally out of control. I heard the other day that there will be 75 titles advertised on television this year for Christmas. And, they all can't make money — people have their megaphones out and they are screaming at the top of their lungs.

Fallout

GW: With so many titles clamoring for everyone's attention, what do you think a company needs to do to make their title successful?

BF: I think the main thing they need to do is make all elements kick in for the title. It has to be filling a niche, have very unique selling properties — it has to be a very well polished and well balanced title. You also have to have a clever television campaign, you have to hit the right demographics with your campaign and it is really a matter of firing on all cylinders to get something to work.

GW: A lot of companies seem to use an "edge" by doing a sequel or an update to an already established franchise. What do you think of that in comparison to doing new and original titles that might not already have a built-in marketing angle?

BF: I think it is inevitable. I think the consumer has shown with their dollars what they are willing to buy. Publishers go where the consumers are willing to go, so it is a matter of balancing your portfolio. It is as if the consumer is showing us that they are going to buy properties that are well known. You are going to see publishers do a bigger mix of those types of games, and it will bring about a better predictability of revenues for the publisher. But, I think it would be a critical mistake for any publisher to become too stagnant and not do very original stuff at the same time.

GW: How do you see that balance for Interplay between doing franchise and sequels over original games?

> *"Clearly videogames are here to stay. They are very powerful, even more powerful than television."*
>
> - Brian Fargo, Interplay's founder & CEO

BF: I think we have a very healthy mix. Over 50% of our titles are brand or sequel driven and the other half are brand new and original like *Heart of Darkness* or *Messiah* or the way *Fallout* was last year. I think we have shown that we are willing to take risks.

GW: Who do you see as your competition in the marketplace?

BF: Electronic Arts is certainly big, but they are in a league by themselves especially when it comes to sports titles. One thing Interplay is really good at is that we know how to launch titles and we know how to take creative people and hone what they have and create hits out of nothing, that is what Interplay is really good at. My biggest competition is really Activision and GT.

GW: What challenges do you see affecting your company over the next 3 to 5 years?

BF: I think as far as challenges for us, number one is to make that full transi-

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tion to a console company and aligning ourselves with some of the top talent.

I would say that I feel very good about our strategy right now and the challenges that are ahead of us. I think that maintaining proper pricing in the marketplace is important whereas others are still willing to just throw money at this business at all costs and not worry about the future consequences. I think that is a problem. That's not just an Interplay specific challenge but that is an industry challenge, so that gets to me more so than anything else. Instead of throwing out huge marketing dollars and selling products at inordinately low prices, making the consumer think you can spend two million on development, two million on advertising and then sell it for $20 retail, we just aren't there yet — perhaps some day we will be.

The other big challenge for us is that the Internet is changing the world and as software publishers how are we going to participate in finding a strategy to allow us to operate in this world.

GW: With all that in mind, where do you think the industry is headed currently?

BF: I think the industry hasn't even started to scratch the surface of where we are going. You look at how we are getting close to there being enough videogame consoles out there that we are going to come close to rivaling the VCR — you look at the appliance of the home and everything electrical from washing machines, to televisions, to VCR's to stereos and you see this arc and look at videogames — they are on the same arc — and whether it is on the Internet or you have set top boxes or whatever it is, clearly videogames are here to stay. They are very powerful, even more powerful than television, because we all know of times when we have sat up until two in the morning playing these games because we just can't stop. And, I think the software publishers themselves they are in the position — we are the content creators, we have been doing that for 15 years and we will be the ones who reap the benefits of all of it.

Namco

In its long history, Namco has had its share of success. From *Pac Man* to *Tekken*, they have shown that they know a thing or two about the staying power of a good arcade franchise, and with the PlayStation they were able to finally carve a niche for themselves in the console market as a solid home game developer. As the interactive entertainment industry continues to grow, they are poised to grow with it, capitalizing on their past success while creating new franchises and properties.

We spoke to Jeff Miller, Senior Vice President at Namco Hometek Inc., recently to get an idea of what the company is working on now, and how they plan to grow with the industry.

GW: What is Namco's history?

JM: Namco has been around since 1955 and entered the videogame market place in 1974. *Pac-Man* was introduced in 1980, and Namco continued to have successful arcade product in the 80's with titles like *Dig Dug*, *Galaxian* and *Pole Position*. The string of hits continued in the 90's with *Ridge Racer*, *Tekken*, *Air Combat*, *Soul Blade* and *Time Crisis*. Namco has always taken a purist approach to converting games from the arcade to consumer platforms. Prior to the 32 and 64 bit systems, consoles didn't perform at a high enough level to take advantage of Namco's technology and game performance. This changed with the introduction of the PlayStation. This was a real "coming of age" period for Namco on the consumer side of the business. Namco had several successful 16 bit and handheld games (especially in Japan), but Namco's games for the PlayStation reached a new level of success. We defined the look, feel, gameplay, and technological advantages of the PlayStation with games like *Ridge Racer* and *Tekken*. Namco has set a very high standard for arcade game conversions that actually go beyond the original versions. Consumers have come to expect this from publishers, and we have continued to meet and exceed their expectation with sequels like *Tekken 3*.

GW: What are your key titles for this Christmas season?

JM: *Tekken 3* will continue to be a primary focus for Namco for this Christmas. We will also release *Tales of Destiny* in September. This is our first RPG for the PlayStation, and we're looking forward to building Namco's presence in this growing category. Namco's *Greatest Hits* line-up will also be extremely strong this Christmas. *Tekken 2 Greatest Hits* was released in early August and *Soul Blade* will hit the streets in October. Combining these two titles with our existing *Greatest Hits* line-up of *Tekken*, *Air Combat* and *Ridge Racer* will undoubtedly maintain our position as the number one third-party in this category. We are also extremely excited about our *Pac-Man 3D* title for the

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PlayStation. This will be a first quarter 99 release.

GW: What do you have planned for sales and marketing behind these titles?

JM: We will spend well in excess of $3 million to advertise and promote our titles this fall. The majority will be spent on television advertising for *Tekken 3*, but we have extremely broad marketing and promotion plans that include demo discs, sponsorships, and contests as well as traditional co-op and print adverting *Tales of Destiny* and the *Greatest Hits* titles are being promoted through co-op advertising and promotions with our retail customers. *Pac-Man* is obviously one of Namco's key icons so you can bet that we plan to back this title with extensive marketing support.

GW: Do you think that marketing and advertising costs for a "hit" game have gotten out of hand?

JM: There are several components to having a "hit" and effectively marketing it today. Product quality and broad appeal, with product quality being the most important, are crucial elements to creating a "hit". Marketing and advertising become critical factors to success once quality and potential for broad appeal have been achieved. The majority of the high profile failures or disappointments to publishers today are usually related to either lower product quality or the publisher's over-estimation of quality. You are not going to have a successful, profitable product if, in the end, the product was a "B" title and you put a multi-million dollar marketing campaign behind it. There are only a few publishers that can get away with pushing a poor quality title into the market, and they are smart enough to realize it has long-term repercussions if you continue down that path. Overall, I don't see too many publishers having the ability to buy market share to the detriment of profitability. There is the occasional case of over spending for the sake of long-term branding and name recognition, but it seems like there is much less emphasis on huge marketing campaigns pushing poor quality, licensed product than was the case in the 16-bit days.

GW: What do you think of the current platforms to develop on?

JM: We definitely have a two horse race with Nintendo and Sony, and I think that we are moving toward a very interesting period in the market share war. Nintendo has a different competitor than they did with Sega in the 16-bit days. Nintendo was successful by not abandoning the SNES, having great software bundles with hardware at a reasonable price, and releasing a smaller number of titles emphasizing the high profile *Donkey Kong* series. Nintendo sold millions of units of hardware and software while their competition prematurely introduced their next console. Sony, however, will be a different competitor over the next few years. The PlayStation's software publishing model is extremely attractive to publishers and retailers alike. At the end of the 32 and 64 bit lifecycles, new hardware purchasers will be very cost conscious. Sony's Greatest Hits category will be an ideal fit to meet consumer's expectations. The reason this is so significant is that the discount product available as the SNES and Genesis declined was mostly "B" and overstock product. The Greatest Hits line reaches the same price conscious consumer, but the titles are all the PlayStation's top sellers. We also can't forget that the Greatest Hit's publishing model allows everyone along the chain (manufacturer, first party company, third party publisher and retailer) to make money which was rarely the case at the end of the 16-bit days.

Tekken 3

GW: What do you see as the differences between the PC and console markets currently?

JM: There are the obvious differences of mass-market appeal, distribution differences, and hardware price, but the real differences come down to gameplay and customer demographics. Basically, publishers need to develop gameplay and interfaces differently for the PC and console consumer. You are inherently going to have a different game experience if you are 20 to 40 years old playing a game at a desk with a mouse and a keyboard versus being 8 to 24 years old sitting on a couch with a game controller. Game publishers have, for the most part, recognized these differences and

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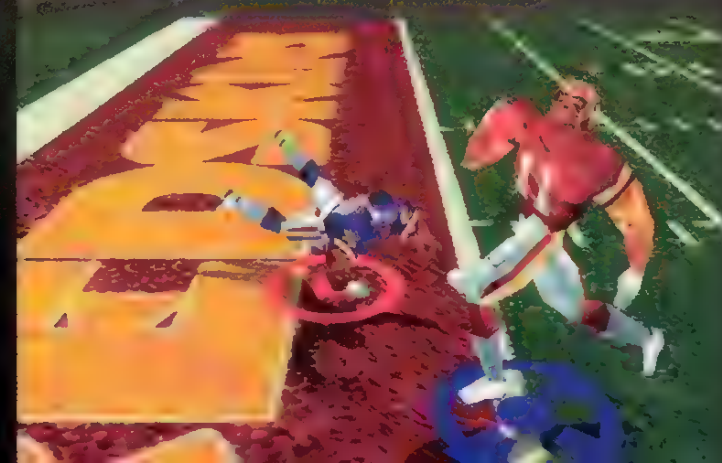

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targeted a primary platform and game controls for a specific game. Rarely does a game, even a high profile game, have large crossover appeal. They usually have more success on the PC or the consoles and do much lower numbers on the other. Release timing definitely affects this, but it is my opinion that it really comes done to gameplay differences and your targeted consumer.

GW: How do you think Sega's re-entry into the market with the Dreamcast will affect things?

JM: There is no question that the game industry will be watching Sega very closely to see how they handle their comeback. Sega has both an uphill battle and a tremendous opportunity. With the disappointment of the Saturn, Sega is in control of their own destiny. Even though Sega would love for publishers to respond to their "build it and they will come" approach, many software publishers are more likely to "wait and see." Therefore, Sega's own launch and second wave titles need to be extremely strong. If Sega succeeds it will attract publishers to their platform.

GW: What do you think about the glut of franchise and sequel based games out there right now as opposed to original titles?

JM: I am definitely concerned with the lack of original and unique games and characters. The reality is that it is less risky to establish new games and characters at the beginning of a console's life, and if its gameplay and appeal are there, you can build a franchise that can be exploited through sequels. Publishers need to extend their development dollars as much as possible through cross-platform publishing and sequelization, but if that's all we have to offer, the future isn't very bright. Our industry as a whole suffers from a lack of originality and unique game experiences. How many years has it been now that the primary action games for the consoles rely on a cute character that jumps from platform to platform collecting gold items and jumping on boxes? And I'm not talking about one platform or publisher.

Tekken 3

We are all guilty of this. Most of the gameplay advances have been on the PC side with real-time strategy games and first person shooters, but even those have just been regurgitated over and over again. There seems to be a lack of unique gameplay elements and story, even though these are two of the most critical ingredients to our industry's future success. This seems to be a major problem in the entertainment industry as a whole.

GW: What do you think of your competition currently?

JM: Namco's primary focus over the last few years has been on the PlayStation. In terms of units sold, Namco's market share has been pretty consistent. In 1997, we were the third largest PlayStation publisher. So far this year, we have the same position. Sony has the largest share, Electronic Arts is second, and Namco is third. In the fighting game category, Capcom and Midway are our primary competitors, but *Tekken 3* will definitely be the best selling fighting game and could be the best selling PlayStation game of the year

GW: Where do you see the interactive entertainment industry headed right now?

JM: I think the next few years will be a crossroads for the industry. We can either do more of the same and stagnate, or we can bring in new elements, gameplay, stories and genres and grow the industry. I think that we shouldn't be overly confident based on the success of the 32 and 64 bit systems. One of the reasons for the success of these platforms has been the level of graphic quality above previous systems. Although the graphic capabilities of the next generation systems will surpass the current ones, they are not likely to see the same jump that the current systems have had. Graphics will begin to loss their luster if game experiences don't follow and expand. I think this is a more important issue for the industry than who has 49% versus 51% market share.

Sierra

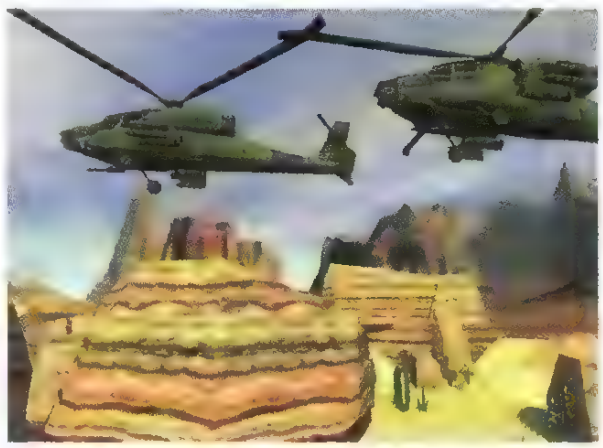
Few companies have been in the interactive entertainment business as long as Sierra, and very few have been as successful. Keeping a relatively low profile over the years and focusing on the PC market, they have been able to achieve a great deal of success while sticking with the same basic formula that has always worked for them. In the past they have dabbled in the console market, but their PC graphic adventure titles have always been the backbone of their business.

Now, looking to branch out into the console market more heavily, they are gearing up to further increase their market share and power as a publisher. We recently spoke with Stephanie Hooper, VP of marketing communications at Sierra, to get an idea of where the company is headed.

GW: What do you see as the current status of Sierra?

SH: Our status is great, we are in the midst of working on some great titles for the fourth quarter as well as some great ones for 1999.

GW: What do you see as your key titles for this Christmas?



Half Life

SH: Of course there has been a fair amount of press based on what we had at E^3 but I think our biggest title will be *Half Life*. We are looking forward to that but we also have some other fabulous titles coming up in our Sierra Studios line one of which is *Homeworld*. We also have some of our other brands, like *Head Rush* which is out of our Sierra Attractions line, Sierra Sports' *Grand Prix Legends* will also be one of our big titles and we have a fair amount of other sports titles coming up and I think there will be lots of great products on the horizon there.

GW: If you can, tell us what do you see as the company's history for the past few years

SH: We are a twenty year old company having our twentieth anniversary next year, which is going to be a very big deal for us and we see a lot of growth that has happened for us over the last twenty years, and we see a lot of exciting growth in 1999 as well

GW: Explain the structure of Sierra and how the company works.

SH: Our structure is pretty clear cut, we have three business units and six brands that come out of those business units Those brands are Sierra Attractions which is our casual gaming brand, we have Sierra FX which is our intermediate gamer brand which focuses primarily on licensed products, there is Sierra Home Group which is representative of our productivity line. There is Sierra Sports, which clearly includes all of our sports titles whether it is team or out-door recreation, extreme sports or motor sports, Sierra Studios is our core gaming brand which really includes lots of our triple A Sierra heritage products which come out of our twenty year history, Dynamix is our other core gaming brand that focuses on simulation products whether its flight or combat.

GW: What do you have planned for the sales and marketing behind your key titles this Christmas?

SH: We have lots of great plans. We have advertising campaigns that we have been running and will continue to run. We have some key promotions happening and big marketing plans relative essentially to each brand or each product that really varies by brand and certainly by product. But we are in the midst of many campaigns for our products that will launch this year as well as for products that are going to be coming out next year.

GW: Do you think that the cost of development, marketing and advertising have gotten out of hand for a "hit" game?

SH: Absolutely not. What we are finding is that the demand for our products is very high and it is very important for us to communicate to our different consumer groups and our different targets what those products are all about, so we believe that telling the story about our products to the target audience is essential. There is a lot of technology, a lot of new creativity and it is important that we tell that story. And, on the development side we believe that quality is first and foremost so if we end up making larger investments into the development of our games it is only to insure that the development will be top notch. And if it requires a little bit more spending we are happy to do it because it is what our consumers are clamoring for so we continue to make great products and do a lot of marketing to help our consumer groups understand what our products are all about.

GW: What platforms are you developing on?

SH: We are focused mainly on PC CD-ROM and we will have a few things coming up for the PlayStation

GW: What do you see as the differences dealing with the PC and "next generation" consoles market?

SH: We are essentially dealing with two separate demographic groups that are pretty distinct, but I think you will see a fair amount of crossover based on the research we have done between those two groups. But, we firmly believe not all games should be multi-platform, but we really want to look to key products to make sure we meet the needs of consumers and that we make them on platforms that really suit the needs of those particular consumer groups.

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GW: Your company is one that has some of the longest running franchises in the business, what do you see as the current status of those franchises and how do you approach those as opposed to original properties?

SH: We are always looking for new and original properties but as long as there is interest in some of our franchise products that are important to our customers out there we are going to continue to go that route. We get a lot of communication from our fans, if you will, that are clamoring all the time for sequels and continuation for product storylines, so we are going to continue to maximize all of those and make sure that we continue to meet the needs and respond back to the input we get from our key customers. But we always continue to look for original material and we are a large company very well poised to do that. Lots of our products come from our internal creativity which is why we are so very well positioned today.

GW: Lastly, where do you see the industry headed at this time?

SH: I think it is going to continue to be very competitive, as it has been for a number of years, but as it continues to grow and expand we see that competition will play an important role as to how we grow and expand. We always want to look to be unique and since we have a fabulous twenty-year history in the industry I think we are viewed in a very unique manner. We have some very positive brand equity and we will continue to build on that and I think that is something some of our competitors don't have. And as Sierra continues to grow we have lots of strengths to grow on and we can do things I don't think many of our competitors can do. I think the industry is going to continue to explode. We have certainly seen it grow in the past five to ten years and this year we have seen tremendous growth and we think we will go that way too in the upcoming years as well.

Sony

There is no doubt about it, Sony is the world's leading console system manufacturer. Many years back, people doubted that a giant electronics company like Sony could enter the videogame industry successfully. Major players like Philips, NEC, Matsushita, Panasonic, and Sharp failed in the past, and everyone was skeptical as to whether or not Sony was going to have the next Walkman or Mini Disc on its hands with the PlayStation- especially when Sega's 32-bit Saturn system was to be their first round of competition.

Flash forward to 1996 when the PlayStation was a year into its successful U.S. run, and everyone was positive that Nintendo would crush them upon the launch of the N64. At first Nintendo did well, racking up an impressive number of titles that sold over a million units, but by the middle of 1997, it appeared as if the PlayStation was consistently selling massive amounts of hardware and software, ultimately claiming the number one "next generation" console spot for 1997.

Now in 1998, everyone is wondering what Sony will do next. With hardware and software sales estimated to be at an all time high for the next two years, many people see them riding comfortably atop the explosive wave that the interactive entertainment industry is generating. But with Nintendo more determined than ever, and Sega waiting in the wings, one can not help but wonder how will they fend off the next round of competition, which could be fiercer than ever.

We spoke with Kaz Hirai, Sony's chief operating officer, recently to get a perspective on where the company is heading.

GW: What is the current state of the PlayStation here in the United States?

KH: Coming out of E^3 just looking at the numbers, we're undoubtedly in the lead as far as the number of installed bases are concerned both here in the United States and in Europe and in Japan — so, certainly on a worldwide basis — and we're continuing to expand on that growth here in the United States, in terms of offering the new skew of the 7000 series that's packaged along with a dual shock analog controller. We also have the upcoming introduction of the PDA later or in early 1999.

GW: Let's talk for a second about the PDA, what is your description of it and what challenges do you see introducing that to the marketplace?

KH: First of all the PDA as we are calling it, is still a code name, so when it finally comes out I think we will put a more user friendly name to it. So it is just a code name for now. The PDA is the size of a memory card for the PlayStation which actually plugs into the memory card slot. It has an LCD display and it has several buttons on it and what you are able to do, once you have PDA compatible PlayStation software and depending on what sort of program it is, you are able to download parts of the game. Characters of a role-playing game or fighting game, for example, can be downloaded onto your PDA and then you are able to play that character or improve upon the stats if you will. What you are also able to do since it has an infrared communication capability, you are able to exchange data with other friends that have the PDA unit as well. You are able to compare stats, perhaps compare attributes from your opponents for say a fighting game and then you are able to take that back and plug it into your PlayStation once more, upload it and continue playing the game that you have on the console based on new attributes or information you have gotten from your friends. So what it does is that it takes the PlayStation experience away from the confines of your living room, or den or family room and it allows people to experience that outside of the home environment.

Spyro the Dragon

GW: I want to also talk about the key titles coming out for Christmas, but I also know that Sony has decided to spin off key elements of its publishing arm. I was wondering if you could give a little background on that.

KH: Sure, as you probably know, before what we had was Sony Computer Entertainment America which is SCEA and SISA (Sony Interactive Studios of America), which is now 989, two divisions of SCEA, Inc. and the titles that 989 developed were marketed and distributed by SCEA. Now, what we did as of April 1 was to give 989 Studios their own marketing function so that they are able to therefore take the titles that they developed internally and then chart their own course as far as how the product gets marketed. So we are giving them in effect, more autonomy to see their product through. Now SCEA continues to distribute and sell their product to the retailers so we're acting as their distributor but again, we gave them the marketing function, primarily to give them more autonomy and also for them to be able to chart their own destiny in terms of how products get marketed and to be able to finish that part of the equation internally in terms of 989 Studios

GW: Do you see this as a way of opening up some non-biased marketing opportunities to other publishers?

KH: You know at E^3 we talked about third party titles that we feel are strategically important to the PlayStation and this was actually one of the strategies we found to be very successful last year which we are expanding on this year and that is teaming up with certain third party publishers to identify those titles which we think are strategic to the PlayStation and enter into a co-marketing venture where we also are contributing financially to supporting some of the key third party titles. Certainly in that mix are those titles that are published by 989 which we feel are strategically important to the platform, such as *NFL GameDay 99*, we are going to support here at SCEA as well.

GW: So, with that in mind, what do you see as the key titles for this Christmas for the PlayStation?

KH: If you are talking about first party titles, I don't know how far back you consider to be Christmas, but certainly from SCEA we have the third installment of the *Crash Bandicoot* series which we are calling *Crash Bandicoot: Warped*. Before that we are also releasing a title called *Spyro the Dragon*, which is another product that has come out of our relationship with Universal Interactive Studios. We also are releasing the exclusive PlayStation version, of a game based on *A Bug's Life*, which is the Disney movie that is coming out later this year, and then if you are turning to the sports side of 1999, we have the latest installment of the best selling football game which is *NFL GameDay 99*. We also have the successful continuation of our *NHL Face Off* franchise and the *Gamebreaker* series as well So those are some of the titles we have lined up for later this year which we feel are very important titles for the Christmas season.

GW: Speaking of which, what do you have planned for your sales and marketing to further expand your installed user base for this Christmas?

KH: Several things. One, we're going to be committing to the marketing of the PlayStation console and its software, about $140 million just in North America. Components of that are very important, one of the most important being strategic relationships that we will be having with some of the third parties to support their titles and one of those titles will be *Metal Gear Solid* from Konami. We're working with Eidos on the latest installment of *Tomb Raider* and working with the studios on titles like *NFL GameDay 99*. That's going to be a very important strategy as we appeal to the breadth and width of and the wide selection of software that is available to the consumers for the PlayStation as we enter into the Christmas selling season.

GW: In terms of increasing the installed user base, what challenges do you see and how do you see going above and beyond the hardcore gamer market?

KH: I think we have been very successful coming out of Christmas last year and if you look at some of the demographic information that we gathered post Christmas, we were very successful in broadening the user base for the PlayStation, certainly away from the so-called core gamer audience, and we were able to expand the demographics and the age range both upwards and downwards which was a significant widening of the demographics after the Christmas season. I think that trend continues today and will be further amplified during the Christmas and holiday selling season this year. One of the most important things that is going to drive that is the availability of software that appeals to a wide range of people from

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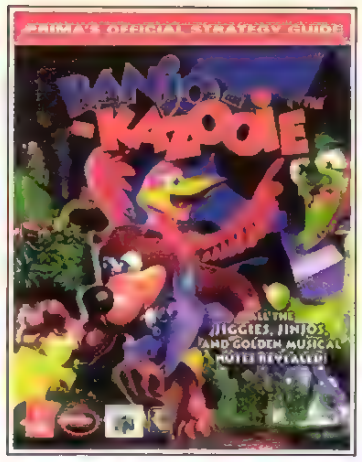

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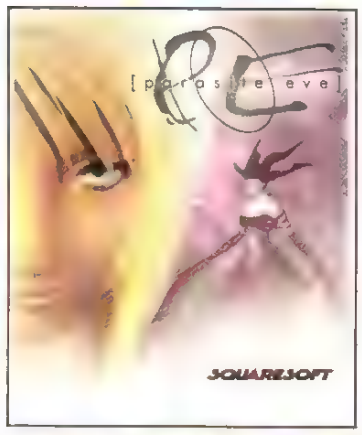

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the very important core gamers to the so called mass audience and I believe that we were able to do that last year on the PlayStation format entering into the holiday selling season and I think that with the line up we have, we meaning both first party and as well as some of the fabulous software selections we are seeing from some of the third parties, is going to send that message home again which I believe is going to translate into a further broadening of the user base of the Playstation.

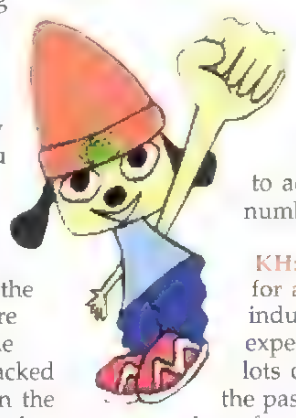
GW: So, how big do you see it getting ultimately?

KH: That's a question that I get asked a lot and I wish I had a clear financial answer because I get asked that by the parent company in Tokyo as well. We, for this fiscal year, which started in April and will end in March of 99, we're looking to increase the installed base by another 8 million or so which will bring the total installed base to about 18-19 million. After that it is somewhat difficult to predict because again the mass appeal that the PlayStation has had with traditional non-core gamers is great—we've gotten some very enthusiastic response in terms of the units we have out on the market and you know the question really is how high is up and that's something we're going to look at. We're kind of in uncharted waters right now and your guess is as good as mine.

GW: So, with that in mind where would you say the PlayStation is in terms of percentage of its lifecycle in the U.S.?

KH: That's another question I get asked a lot, and traditionally videogame systems have had a five year life cycle. If you look back on the PlayStation which was released here in America back in September of 1995, then a lot of people are looking at this year as the third year and if you look at the bell curve then a lot of people are saying that this is going to be the biggest year. Again, I'm not sure that given the appeal that the PlayStation has and supported by the type of first party and third party software, I'm not sure that we're going to follow this traditional bell curve cycle of five years.

GW: As opposed to introducing new hardware, some of the things that have been overlooked by many are the changes you've made to the console — can you elaborate on the new hardware modifications you have made?



KH: First of all, some of the apparent changes that a lot of people can see, especially with the new PlayStation 7000 series, are first of all the fact that we have the Dual Shock Analog Controller packed in as the standard controller. On the console side we added the little feature called the sound scope which is when you are playing back your audio CD's, not the PlayStation CD's, you can design and change and come up with a graphic display kind of like a kaleidoscope that changes its design in tune with the music that you are playing and which you can see on your television set. It's an added feature that we added on the latest 7000 series.

Now, apart from that to increase the manufacturing efficiency which hopefully will enable us to increase the productivity of the PlayStation console, we have constantly refined that so we are able to provide enough PlayStation units to the market within the confines of a limited manufacturing capacity, because our manufacturing capacity is not unlimited, so what we are trying to do is to increase the manufacturing efficiency in order to be able to pump out more units with the same resources that we had. So the analog controller and the sound scope are very visible improvements to the system, and also manufacturing efficiency improvements and design improvements ultimately end up benefiting the consumer as well because we are able to pump enough units out into the marketplace.

> *"One of the challenges we have in this industry really is for the industry as a whole to be able to garner the kind of respect it deserves like the music industry or television industry."*
>
> - Kaz Hirai, Sony's Chief Operating Officer

GW: It seems that you have done things that are more innovative than your competition. How do you see yourselves as sort of the leader of worldwide gaming?

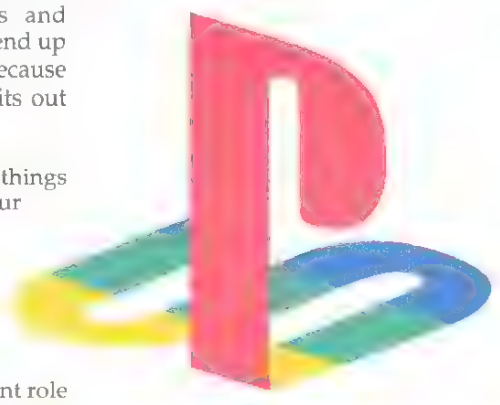
KH: That's a very good question. I feel that it is a very important role and it is a role that I believe has a lot of responsibility to it. We owe it to ourselves as far as the platform is concerned and to the third party publishers, the retailers and the consumer, to make responsible and strategic decisions to make sure the PlayStation continues the success that it has had to date so that their involvement and the company's involvement in the videogame sector are profitable from being involved with the PlayStation. I think that is very crucial and with it comes a lot of responsibility. I don't think we can make responsible decisions just because they affect us but because they are going to affect a good number of people who are involved in the PlayStation.

GW: How do you see your competition, like Nintendo who has had to admit that they are now number two?

KH: They've been around for a very long time in this industry, they have a lot of experience, they have faced lots of tough competition in the past as well so I do have a lot of respect for Nintendo. I don't know that I consider them to be our only competitor. I have always said that it is important that we not only focus on the competition in terms of Nintendo and Sega but we are offering an entertainment media to the consumer so what we are doing is competing with other forms of entertainment for people's spare time and money whether it is going to the movies, buying CDs, hanging out and playing pool and having a beer, or playing the PlayStation at home. So we see all media activities in one form or another as competition against our format.

GW: What do you think about Sega re-entering the market with the Dreamcast?

KH: I think they will have an uphill battle in terms of getting support from the retailers, given their past history but I think at the end of the day most people



will agree with me that it is really what they are able to do in terms of software. If they have compelling software for the new system that is going to be the key.

GW: Speaking of compelling software, what do you think of the state of software development? It seems like there is a glut of franchise and sequel based software right now as opposed to companies developing original concepts.

KH: Right. I think it is a function of the maturity or the mass appeal that the PlayStation has in that proven franchises do have a very large market to appeal to when we are talking about an installed base of over 11 million units. So, I think it is a natural course in the evolution of a certain format, especially a successful format, and I think that when we look at what we publish as a first party we try to insure that our product is always fresh in that we are able to come out with something new and innovative to push the envelope. I believe it is an investment that we owe to ourselves, to the format and to third parties as well to try out new types of game software that really pushes the envelope. Take *Parappa the Rapper* for example, that is the type of game you probably wouldn't have seen from a third party publisher and we made the investment in terms of time and money to develop and market that title to prove to everybody that that sort of genre is a viable one and that has resulted in titles such as *Spice World* or titles like *Bust-A-Groove*, which obviously have their own unique gameplay and I don't think we would have seen games like that had it not been for our trial in a game like *Parappa*. So again, as a first party I think it is incumbent on us to try new games, to try them out and if successful to have the third parties see there is a viable market for this new genre.

NFL Gameday '99

GW: What challenges do you see in the marketing of a game like *Parrappa* or a *Spice World* — do you think people don't get it at first and you might have to take a non-traditional route to selling the product?

KH: I think that it is just like any other game, but if we are talking about a new genre like *Parappa* it is really important that we build awareness just by having a lot of people try the game out whether it is at retail or at one of the PlayStation tour events that we do, or through rentals or whatever we do. At the end of the day you can describe a game and tell people how much fun it is but its not going to get across until they actually pick up a controller and try it. Especially with a game like *Parappa*, that's been one of the most important strategies, to make sure people get their hands on the game and see themselves and come to their own conclusions as to whether they like the game or not.

GW: Where do you see the industry headed?

KH: I have a very bullish and a very optimistic outlook for the industry as a whole. Given our installed base and the vibrant publishing community and just looking at the excitement we all saw at E^3, I have a very bullish outlook. One of the challenges we have is for the industry as a whole to be able to garner the kind of respect it deserves like the music or television industry and to have the media such as yourself, the consumer, our representatives on Capitol Hill or wherever to say, "Yes, this is a viable entertainment industry and entertainment format that is here to stay just like the movie and music industry". Unfortunately we as an industry still have a long way to go to earn that respect. But, I think with the trade association our industry is making and establishing the Interactive Academy of Arts and Sciences, I think all those things we are trying to do are going to give us the visibility and respect that we deserve. **GW**

Calendar

September

26-27
Focus On Video
Ontario, Canada

12-15
Software Publishers Assc.
Chicago, IL

8-11
RetailVision
Cornado, CA

17-19
AMOA Expo
Nashville, TN

October

5-9
Fall Internet World
New York, NY

13-16
Digital Video Expo
Pasadena, CA

6-8
East Coast Video Show
Atlantic City, NJ

28-29
Electronics Boutique
Nashville, TN

November

16-20
COMDEX

20-22
Nintendo SpaceWorld
Tokyo, Japan

January

7-10
CES
Las Vegas, NV

February

12-15
International Toy Fair
New York, NY

9-12
Milia
Cannes, France

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Top 25 Renting Games

for the weeks of July 27-August 9, 1998

Rank	Title	Platform	Publisher	Date	Weekly Turns (000)	Weekly Revenue (000)
1	Banjo-Kazooie	N64	Nintendo	Nov-97	234.55	$724.58
2	Goldeneye 007	N64	Nintendo	Mar-97	155.85	$476.57
3	Mortal Kombat 4	N64	Midway	Jun-98	136.45	$407.06
4	Off Road Challenge	N64	Midway	May-98	132.99	$398.02
5	WWF: Warzone	PSX	Acclaim Ent.	Jul-98	124.76	$368.85
6	WCW vs N.W.O	N64	THQ	Dec-97	115.67	$355.24
7	MLB w/ K. Griffey Jr	N64	Nintendo	May-98	103.51	$309.84
8	1080 Snowboarding	N64	Nintendo	Apr-98	100.70	$296.76
9	Quest 64	N64	THQ	Jun-98	94.94	$292.38
10	Mission Impossible	N64	Nintendo	Nov-96	94.65	$290.24
11	Mortal Kombat 4	PSX	Midway	May-98	94.91	$287.17
12	Gran Turismo	PSX	Sony Comp.	May-98	91.20	$282.18
13	All Star Baseball '99	N64	Acclaim Ent.	May-98	89.52	$278.23
14	NFL Xtreme	PSX	Sony Comp.	Jul-98	96.89	$275.53
15	Road Rash 3D	PSX	Electronic Arts	Feb-98	91.15	$262.64
16	Yoshi's Story	N64	Nintendo	Feb-98	72.23	$217.63
17	Tekken 3	PSX	Namco	Apr-98	69.58	$212.01
18	Rampage World Tour	N64	Midway	Feb-98	70.94	$207.07
19	Vigilante 8	PSX	Activision	May-98	70.08	$205.89
20	Need For Speed III	PSX	Electronic Arts	Mar-98	66.13	$190.28
21	F1 World Grand Prix	N64	Nintendo	Jul-98	61.24	$188.44
22	Chopper Attack	N64	Midway	May-98	63.49	$180.85
23	Resident Evil 2	PSX	Capcom	Oct-97	60.64	$180.45
24	WCW Nitro	PSX	THQ	Sep-97	60.95	$175.87
25	Mario Kart	N64	Nintendo	Feb-97	65.27	$173.01

Reviews

F-22 Total Air War

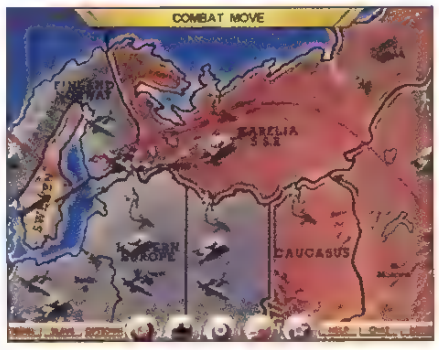
Platform: PC
Genre: Simulation
Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: DID
Available: Now
Wholesale: N/A
MSRP: $49.99
GW Rating: A-

While there was a time when you could count the number of current flight sims on one hand, nowadays, you almost need two just to add up the number of F-22 simulations released in the last twelve months. But our friends at DID, not content with merely having the most realistic F-22 sim in AOD, has decided to create the ultimate with *Total Air War*, a title that not only addresses its predecessor's shortcomings, but also virtually creates a whole new genre of flight sim strategy game.

The 3Dfx engine definitely has the goods in the good looks department with everything from realistic crashes to true 3D clouds. But we've all seen good looking flight sims, and for *TAW*, that's only the beginning, as it's as much a strategy wargame as it is flight sim. You can choose to assume the role of a Weapons Officer, AWACS Commander, Combat Pilot or Tactical Mission Planner, jumping from role to role as the mission merits if you so desire. The Advanced Mission Planner software will let you employ the latest in stealth tactics, assembling formidable strike packages from a wide variety of aircraft types and sending them out, sitting back in the rel ative safety of your command outpost and watch how your strategy unfolds.

The Bottom Line: Definitely a solid flight sim with some impressive features. However, it's not going to get nearly the attention from the press as Falcon 4.0 is, so while you should carry a few copies, don't sacrifice Falcon space for it.

- Shane Mooney



Axis & Allies

Platform: PC
Genre: Strategy
Publisher: Hasbro Interactive
Developer: Hasbro Interactive
Available: October
Wholesale: N/A
MSRP: $39.95
GW Rating: B

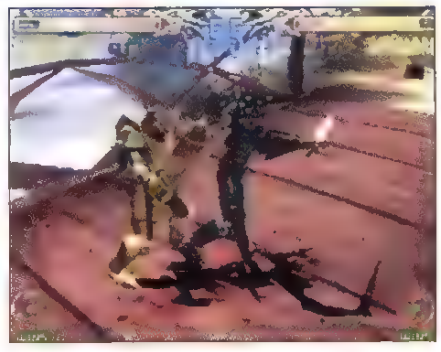
Grognards - or old school, hardcore strategy gaming folk - have been getting the shaft as of late. The genre that once dominated the platform in the pre-SVGA days has been suffering from a serious drought of thought-provoking games - thanks in large part to the success of real time strategy games like *Command & Conquer* and *WarCraft / StarCraft*. Seeking to quench this thirst - and to get in good with a relatively affluent audience of gameplayers - Hasbro is about to bring the grand daddy of strategy board games - *Axis & Allies* - to the PC.

With respect to game rules, the PC version is identical to the board game. If you've never played the board game before, just imagine the most complex version of chess possible and you'll get a good idea.

Spicing up the game's offering is stock footage from World War II and some relatively - by boardgame-to-PC conversion standards - high quality graphics. But to be sure, this product's target market won't be looking for eye candy when they pick it up. They're going to be looking for lots and lots of mind-bending strategic gameplay and it looks like they're going to get it.

The Bottom Line: Between its authenticity and the addition of PC-specific bells and whistles - not to mention multiplayer options that include LAN, Internet play (through Microsoft's Zone)- the game has all the goods to appeal to its target market.

- Reilly Brennan



Cardinal Syn

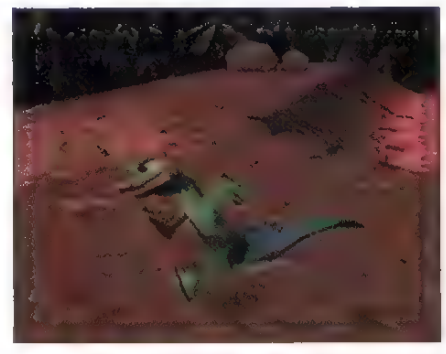
Platform: PlayStation
Genre: Fighting
Publisher: Sony Computer Ent.
Developer: Kronos
Available: Now
Wholesale: N/A
MSRP: $44.95
GW Rating: B-

Classic fighting games like *Tekken 3*, *Virtua Fighter 2* and *Street Fighter* series are a dying breed. It's hard to beat their depth, complexity and overall gameplay. Newer fighting games show off great graphics and sound, but the gameplay and control just isn't there. *Cardinal Syn* from 989 Studios is one of those games. On the surface, it's beautiful. With its gorgeous landscapes and highly detailed characters, *Cardinal Syn* almost rivals *Soul Blade*, but after playing a few rounds, the game fails miserably in almost every aspect.

There are over 18 fighters to choose from. Players start off with eight and the other fighters become available after winning certain rounds and unlocking one of the many secrets of the game. *Cardinal Syn* utilizes a basic combo fighting system where players are able to chain basic attacks with special ones. Each character has a unique weapon - whether it is a sword or battle-ax, which they can use in accordance with other moves. Correct combos in conjunction with weapon blows reward players with dismemberment deathblows. This is where the game stumbles. Whereas in other fighting games such as *Tekken 3*, the control schematic is simple, this method of linking together attacks is frustrating, as it is difficult.

The Bottom Line: Even though *Cardinal Syn* is good looking, the control and gameplay make it a poor fighting game. Look for adequate initial sales, but expect a drop off after players see how weak the game really plays.

- Tom Ham



Gex: Enter the Gecko

Platform: PC
Genre: Action
Publisher: Midway
Developer: Crystal Dynamics
Available: September
Wholesale: N/A
MSRP: $29.99
GW Rating: B

OK. Here's the $64,000 question: can a character-based platformer that excels on the console systems perform similarly on the PC? Crystal Dynamics thinks the answer is "yes." They tested this premise with the first *Gex*; it was a success on the 3DO and the PlayStation. After a bit of lag, it was released via Microsoft for the PC (part of their arcade series) and did relatively well - for a platform game. They're pursuing the PC market a bit more aggressively this time around, launching the PC version almost concurrent with the console versions.

While it's a tough road that lies before the game - given the action/platform record on the PC - it's got a few things going for it. First, it has the host of people that picked up the first game and dug it. While this doesn't add up to a staggering number of people, there are quite a few. Second, you've got the all-important brand recognition; when it comes to mainstream media buzz, only Mario and Crash Bandicoot exceed Gex in volume. Lastly, you've got Midway's deep pockets backing the thing, so you can be sure that any market even remotely interested in the product will be hearing about it in print ads.

The Bottom Line: *Gex: Enter the Gecko* is a strong game - replete with nifty graphical effects and bolstered by a relatively good pedigree. If there's going to be a console-to-PC crossover hit this year, this is going to be the one.

- Reilly Brennan

GameWEEK RATINGS SYSTEM

A Will be one of the best selling games for that particular platform. Strong marketing and word of mouth comp e ment s perb gameplay and excellent design. This is a must stock game for any retail rental store.

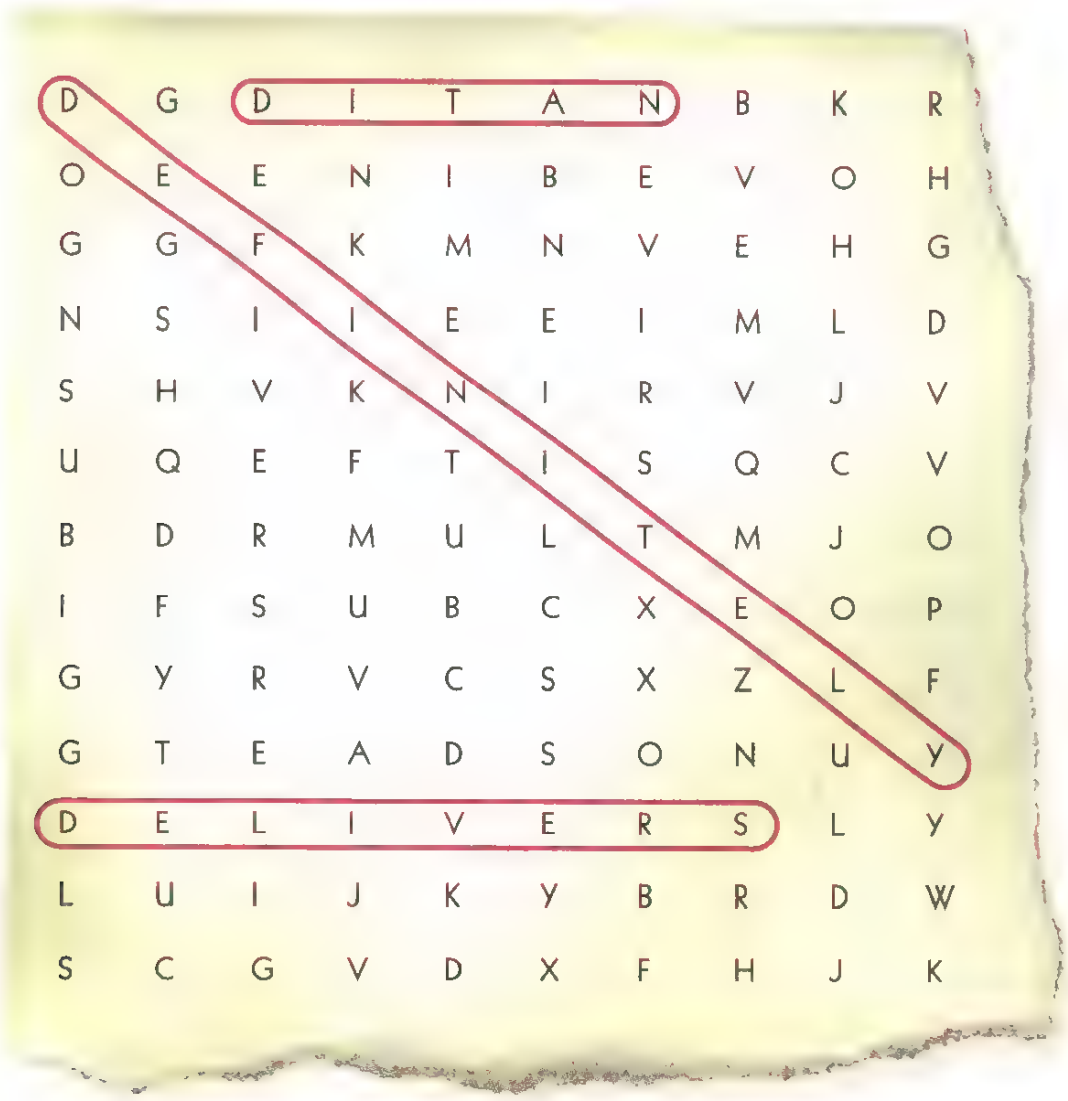
B A great game that is just lacking in some areas. It w l sel we l and b ing in the masses, but not to the extent of an "A" title. Retailers should make sure to buy this product deep enough to satisfy their ndividual store demands with some to spare.

C A good game that will sell about "average" in terms of sales. It is lacking in a few departments, therefore not worthy of a "B".

D A game that is unsupported by the manufacturer, lacking in qua ity and should have stayed in development longer. This category may rent occasion ly and sell only to legitimate fans.

F A product that never should have been cons dered much ess released. A thoroughly unimpressive t tle that will only sel at drastically discounted prices.

Software distribution: It's a jumble out there.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Independence War

Platform: PC
Genre: Action
Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: Particle Systems
Available: September
Wholesale: N/A
MSRP: $49.95
GW Rating: B

Combining simulation elements as well as action and strategy is Particle Systems' latest title, *Independence War*. Based on an original science fiction story, *Independence War* is set in the future at a time when the interests of Earth have clashed with views of other space colonies. Now it has evolved into all-out war between the two sides-The Commonwealth and The Indies.

Independence War tells the story of a 150-meter long, heavily armored space vessel called the Dreadnaught. Players can take on four different roles in the game including Captain, Pilot, Engineer and Weapons Officer. The game is broken down into a series of missions and to prevent it from becoming a linear adventure like typical games of this sort, the actual story progresses based on the decisions made by the player. To give the game added depth, the developers created a realistic and coherent universe comprised of 4000 stars, 2500 planets and moons modeled from actual astronomical data. The player's ship is composed of 34 independent vital components, which means during battle, your ship is capable of simulating a variety of damage types.

The Bottom Line: This type of game is always popular and with all the arcade-type of space games out there, its nice to have a true space combat simulation, where its not always the best thing to blow-up everything in sight. The effective use of 3D acceleration makes Independence War a great-looking title as well.

Tom Ham

Peter Jacobsen's Golden Tee Golf

Platform: PC
Genre: Sports
Publisher: Incredible Technologies
Developer: Incredible Technologies
Available: Now
Wholesale: N/A
MSRP: $29.99
GW Rating: C+

If you like hanging around bars, then odds are you've already seen this game in its original form. No matter where it's located, though, the thing just keeps sucking in a baffling number of quarters. Incredible Technologies is betting that the game's addictive qualities that made it a success in bars and arcades across the country will translate well to the PC. The thing to remember is this: the audience that plays golf games in an arcade or bar setting is different than the audience that plays these games on their PCs at home. One market wants quick games with an easy interface, the other wants authenticity down to the physics of the wind on the flagstick. PC golf players have proved time and again that the authenticity of the gaming experience is paramount, even if that authenticity comes at the expense of graphics and ease of use.

The Bottom Line: To say that *Golden Tee* fails to deliver any authenticity would be an exaggeration. But to say that it doesn't meet the benchmark set by games like *Links* and EA's *PGA* series would be accurate. Everything about the game - from the looks to the ball physics - are almost as good as the competition, but not quite. If the golf game audience were known to buy many games of a similar type, this wouldn't be so much of an issue. But the truth is that players of these games will buy one - and stick with it. Stock cautiously

- Reilly Brennan

Motocross Madness

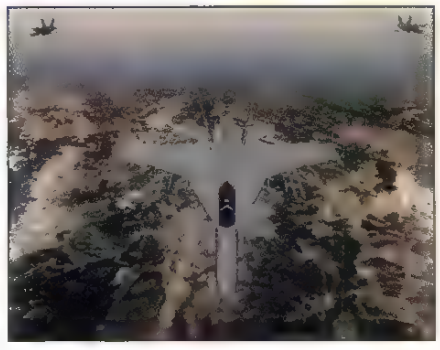
Platform: PC
Genre: Arcade Racing
Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Rainbow Studios
Available: Now
Wholesale: N/A
MSRP: $49.99
GW Rating: A

Microsoft's latest entry into the world of stunt motocross racing is *Motocross Madness*, a game that is addicting as hell. The premiere feature is a unique rider and bike physics model. Players control the throttle, brake, steering and gears on the bike, as well as the rider's center of gravity, which can be moved forward, backward or to either side. The end result is pretty extraordinary. Other game features include a variety of race and stunt environments (30 indoor and outdoor stadiums), including stunt quarry and long-distance Baja courses. *Motocross Madness* also supports multiplayer for up to eight players via LAN, modem or the Internet.

The graphics in *Motocross Madness* are top-notch. The game engine was built from the ground up to take full advantage of 3D-hardware acceleration. To add to the realism of the game, photo-realistic images were incorporated into the graphics engine to make textures and shading that much more realistic. The sound effects in the game are true-to-life and really make for a fun gaming experience, from the revving sounds of the engines to hearing your body getting slammed into a wall.

The Bottom Line: With its combination of slick graphics, great control and addictive gameplay *Motocross Madness* just might be the best racer of the year. The game will not only appeal to the hardcore racing fan, but also to the casual gamer who just wants to get in a few laps and watch some good crash sequences.

- Tom Ham



iF/A-18E Carrier Strike Fighter

Platform: PC
Genre: Simulation
Publisher: Interactive Magic
Developer: Interactive Magic
Available: Now
Wholesale: N/A
MSRP: $49.99
GW Rating: B-

Time was when you could slap any old virtual cockpit onto a game and call it a flight sim. But today's enthusiasts want the intensity and behavior to be so realistic, you can taste the jet fuel. Naturally when you're dealing with a company like Interactive Magic, realism isn't a problem, but in the ever-crowding world of flight sims, *iF/A-18E* is going to have a tough time competing against the better competition.

This title uses the same acclaimed dynamic campaign generator as its *iF-22*, which is capable of creating a limitless number of single missions and full-blown campaigns. There's also the DEMON terrain system, which combines real-world elevation data with satellite imagery to produce hundreds of thousands of square miles of photo-realistic terrain with no repetition (or as little repetition as can be had when flying over miles of desert in the Persian Gulf). This bundled with a great tutorial and excellent audio help make it a solid sim.

Now for the bad news. Despite coming with a host of video options, including 3D accelerated and 1024 x 768, I was disappointed at how arcade-like the graphics looked. The background scenes and the video clips looked good but the game play just seemed too arcade like.

The Bottom Line: You can't go wrong with Interactive Magic and flight sims. However, in this ultra-competitive market, and with a half-dozen sims set to hit shelves, this one is going to be pushed aside for the more feature rich, graphically superior titles on the way.

- Shane Mooney

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Street Fighter II, Volume 2

Platform: PlayStation
Genre: Fighting
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Available: November
Wholesale: N/A
MSRP: $39.95
GW Rating: C-

Never let it be said that Capcom doesn't know how to milk a franchise for every last penny that it's worth. As the title indicates, this is the second of these collections the company is producing. Sauntering back into the spotlight this time around are *Street Fighter II, Street Fighter II Champion Edition*, and *Street Fighter II Hyper Fighting*. The first is, obviously, a port of the original arcade game - arguably the most significant game ever released in this genre. The next two games - *Champion Edition* and *Hyper Fighting* - are (as they were when they were initially released) only marginally improved versions of the original.

Without question, this product is aimed directly at two, very different markets: newbies and the hardcore. Johhny-come-latelys to the PlayStation fighting scene - however few of them there are - will want *Vol. 2* simply because it's an economical way to get a glimpse at the game that started it all. And, of course, there's the even smaller crowd of die hard *Street Fighter* fans who will buy anything with the *SF* logo on it. Combined, these two markets don't really add up to all that many people.

The Bottom Line: While this collection would have been an absolutely fantastic value (and a pretty big hit) a year or two ago, it comes across now as being a weak attempt on Capcom's part to cash in one more time on a franchise that saw its hey day a long time ago.

- Reilly Brennan

S.C.A.R.S.

Platform: PlayStation
Genre: Racing
Publisher: Ubi Soft
Developer: Vivid Image
Available: September
Wholesale: N/A
MSRP: $49.99
GW Rating: B

The backdrop for Ubi Soft's new racer, *S.C.A.R.S. (Super Computer Animal Racing Simulation)* goes something like this: the year is 3000 A.D. and the human race has been extinguished and replaced by supercomputers which have acquired human-like emotions, and feeling slightly bored, these wacky computers decide to entertain themselves with a little racing - combat style (think *Mario Kart* on steroids).

In *S.C.A.R.S.* you can control one of nine super-advanced vehicles, each based on a member of the animal kingdom. The cars have wild designs that range from bizarre (Rhino Roadster) to outrageous (Mantis V-Twin). Each has their own particular strengths and weaknesses based on speed, acceleration, grip, armor and weapons. These deadly cars are put to the test in 9 varied courses littered with weapons to help you destroy your enemies and take home first place. The action is fast and furious in one-player but gets even better in the 4-player mode (using a multi-tap).

The graphics are something to behold. Brilliant lighting, varied textures and excellent special effects round out this entertaining title from Vivid Image and Ubi Soft.

The Bottom Line: Ubi Soft has some solid games coming down the line and *S.C.A.R.S.* shows the attention to detail and excellent craftsmanship existing within that company. This is high quality stuff, but with the glut of racing games on the PlayStation, this title might get overlooked by consumers.

- Ben Rinaldi

WCW/NWO Revenge

Platform: Nintendo 64
Genre: Fighting
Publisher: THQ
Developer: Asmik
Available: October
Wholesale: N/A
MSRP: $59
GW Rating: A+

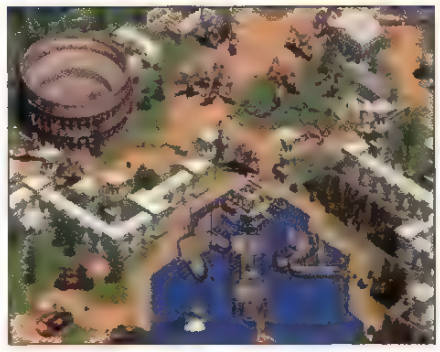
Last year *WCW vs. NWO World Tour* was a smash hit for THQ, so much so that it was inducted into Nintendo's exclusive Player's Choice Series of games. THQ hopes to repeat their success with this year's sequel, *WCW/NWO Revenge*.

How do you improve upon what is widely considered the best wrestling game ever? For starters you keep the best aspects of last year and add more of everything. This 128-bit cart offers twice as many wrestlers as last year, a whopping 80 in all. All-new options include new weapons and the ability to take them into the ring, outside interference from other wrestlers and a cool new instant replay option that plays back finishing moves ala *Virtua Fighter*. The graphics, which were already solid, have been slightly improved and the game plays faster and smoother than last year.

Revenge offers a multitude of modes, such as Season, 4-player Tag Team and an all-new 40 man Battle Royal where the last man standing wins. This year fireworks and music accompany each wrestler's introduction and six different arenas are available including Monday Nitro, Souled Out, Super Brawl, Halloween Havoc, Starcade and Bash at the Beach.

The Bottom Line: THQ has improved an already impressive game with added options and features that captures the essence of the WCW. The legion of wrestling fans should eat this one up as *Revenge* goes toe-to-toe with *Warzone* for the title of best wrestling game this fall.

- Ben Rinaldi



Age of Empires: The Rise of Rome

Platform: PC
Genre: Real-time strategy
Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Ensemble Studios
Available: Fall
Wholesale: N/A
MSRP: $34.95
GW Rating: A-

Although Microsoft isn't yet in a position to release the much anticipated sequel to *Age of Empires*, an expansion pack for the original game is scheduled for release this fall. *Age of Empires: The Rise of Rome* (which requires Age of Empires to play) offers a handful of minor improvements to the overall game, in addition to four new civilizations, an assortment of new units, and a series of new campaigns and scenarios. This package builds slightly on the original AOE game, however, offers only small improvements to what was a superior game when it was released last November.

The new units added to *Rise of Rome* expand the overall strategy element of AOE, giving players the ability to enter battles using camel riders, spike chariots, slingers, warships and armored elephants in addition to all of the units from the original game. In addition, 25 new structures can be created, giving the player added control and more capabilities when building and managing their empire. It's definitely something that the over 1.5 million AOE fans are going to want to get their hands on when this package hits the shelves.

The Bottom Line: *Rise of Rome* offers new challenges and adds a few new features to the highly popular AOE game. While it isn't a sequel, it represents a nice expansion to Microsoft's *Age of Empires* franchise, which has become one of the strongest in the industry. For an expansion package, the consumer demand is expected to be exceptionally high.

-Jason Rich

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Now Playing

Now Playing is a consensus by the GameWEEK editorial staff on the current and projected performance of titles recently introduced to the retail channel. Resources used to finalize these status reports include: *NPD TRSTS* data, enthusiast magazine and website coverage, the perceived effectiveness of the publisher's marketing support campaign and the "buzz" from retail stores and managers.

Batman & Robin

Platform: PlayStation
Genre: Action
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Acclaim
Street Price: $39

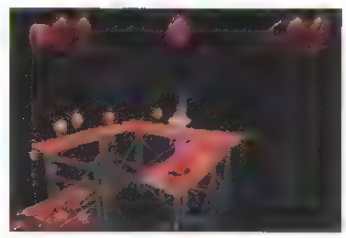
In development for more than two years, Acclaim finally released the video game version of the box office flop, *Batman & Robin*. Essentially a 3D action/adventure game set in a dark and gritty Gotham City, *Batman & Robin* allows gamers to assume the identity of the Dark Knight or the Boy Wonder. In a nutshell, this game, like the movie, fails to impress. The graphics are too dark and pixilated and the controls are beyond frustrating. Since Acclaim has released some good titles lately we'll cut them some slack on this one.

Bottom Of The 9th 99

Platform: PlayStation
Genre: Sports
Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami
Street Price: $39

Bottom of the 9th 99 is Konami's newest update to their baseball franchise. Because of its lackluster graphics, this year's version could easily be confused for a first generation baseball game. On top of that the game was released more than three months after EA Sports' *Triple Play 99* and Sony's *MLB 99*. Anybody who was interested in buying a baseball game has already done so. Even with the recent resurgence of baseball Konami gets caught looking on this one as *Bottom Of The 9th 99* is missing both competitive gameplay and the MLB license.

Jersey Devil



Platform: PlayStation
Genre: Action
Publisher: Sony Comp. Ent.
Developer: Behaviour Int.
Street Price: $45

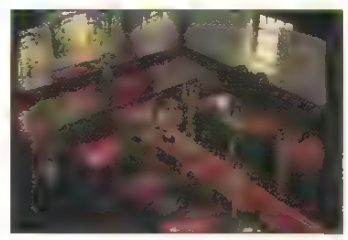
Trying to entice the *Crash Bandicoot* crowd is Sony's latest 3D platformer, *Jersey Devil*. However, where *Crash* was a brilliant game *Jersey Devil* fails in almost every aspect. Even though the game's 12 levels are very well designed and offer a lot of variety, the gameplay still doesn't compare. The game is also plagued with poor control, which leads to a very frustrating experience. Sony ran a short TV campaign for this title but did little else to promote it. Don't expect any long term success for *Jersey Devil*.

Police Quest: SWAT 2

Platform: PC
Genre: Simulation
Publisher: SierraFX
Developer: Yosemite Ent.
Street Price: $40

SierraFX is capitalizing on the huge success of their *Police Quest* line with the recent release of *SWAT 2*. The original game caused quite a stir and legions of Sierra faithful have been dying to get their hands on this title, after all, it is endorsed by former LAPD Chief Daryl Gates. While this game may be hot now, expect it too cool off soon as all the hardcore Sierra fans have already jumped on it and the competition for the real time crowd's dollar is always increasing.

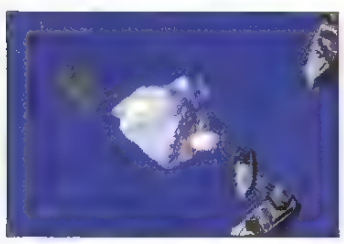
Shining Force III



Platform: Saturn
Genre: Role-playing
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sega
Street Price: $45

Building on the success of last years hit, *Shining the Holy Ark*, *Shining Force III* is a strategic role-playing game that takes players on an adventure through gorgeous landscapes and immersive 3D worlds. Instead of traveling and exploring through pre-rendered backgrounds and villages, players in *Shining Force III* will explore true 3D environments. Other graphical details such as cool cloud formations and wind blowing through trees make for a wondrous experience. *Shining Force III* shows us there is still life in that old Sega Saturn, although very little.

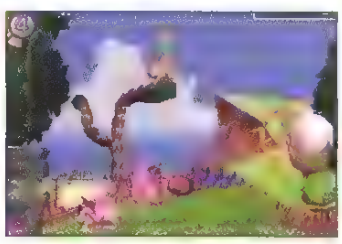
Total Annihilation: Battle Tactics



Platform: PC
Genre: Real-time strategy
Publisher: GT Interactive
Developer: Cavedog
Street Price: $25

Just when you thought we have seen the last of *Total Annihilation*, along comes Cavedog's latest add-on for this incredible game, *Battle Tactics*. *Battle Tactics* features 100 quick missions, new scenarios and varying degrees of difficulty so novices can play the game. The problem with playing *Total Annihilation* was that some of the scenarios would take hours to complete. This is not the case with *Battle Tactics*. Players can jump right into a heated battle and finish off an opponent. This is a must buy for *Total Annihilation* fans.

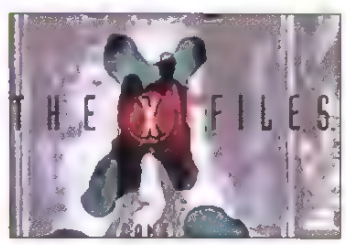
Tomba



Platform: PlayStation
Genre: Platformer
Publisher: Sony Comp. Ent.
Developer: Whoopee Camp
Street Price: $45

Tomba is a very good arcade platformer that's reminiscent of the classic side-scrollers from the 16-bit days. Players guide the main character through lush worlds, each with its own unique "event" which needs to be cleared to proceed. In addition to the requisite jumping, running and fending off evil pigs, *Tomba* adds some RPG elements to the mix. A solid platformer that Sony is really pushing, however just not enough to entice today's 3D-hungry gamer.

X Files



Platform: PC
Genre: Adventure
Publisher: Fox Interactive
Developer: HyperBole Studios
Street Price: $45

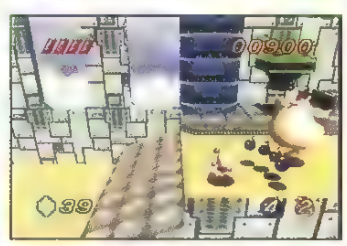
The X Files phenomenon continues as the PC game is riding the wave of both the television show and the summer movie. Despite some mixed reviews and the fact that the game shipped on seven CDs, fans have been all over this game proving that anything related to the X Files is going to sell. A number of stores we visited were even dedicating end caps to the X Files, by putting all of the products including videos, laserdiscs, *X Files: Unrestricted Access*, the movie soundtrack and various books together in one display.

WWF Warzone

Platform: PlayStation, N64
Genre: Wrestling
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Acclaim
Street Price: $45

Looking at Acclaim's line up for this year who would have thought that *WWF Warzone* would be one of their top sellers? Well, so far it is as the popularity of professional wrestling continues to grow. Warzone comes through with impressive graphics and a great create a wrestler feature that makes for some hilarious matches. The just released N64 version is selling just as well as the PlayStation game. Acclaim timed the realease of these game perfectly, as both titles had little to compete against in the month of August. Expect *WWF Warzone* to sell right through Christmas.

Bomberman Hero



Platform: N64
Genre: Action
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Hudson Soft
Street Price: $49

Last year Nintendo picked up the publishing rights to Hudson's *Bomberman 64*. The game sold well enough for Nintendo to do the same thing with this year's sequel *Bomberman Hero*. Set in a 3D environment, *Bomberman Hero* offers five worlds and 60 levels of exploration and platforming action. Not one of Nintendo's stronger titles for the fall, *Bomberman Hero* will most likely get lost in the sea of N64 platformers that are releasing this time of year. *Bomberman Hero* does have some fun qualities but it will only appeal to fans of last years game.

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Microsoft Freestyle Pro

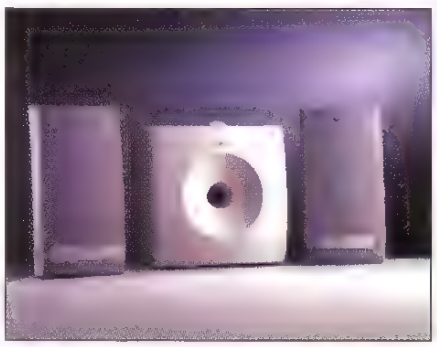
Platform: PC
Genre: Controller
Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Microsoft
Available: Now
Wholesale: N/A
MSRP: $74.99
GW Rating: A

You gotta admit, gamepads for computers are pretty generic. They all have some type of directional pad, 8-10 buttons and different types of handgrips. They come in all kinds of shapes, colors and sizes. Who would think that Microsoft would come out with a new game controller that is truly extraordinary. Available with the purchase of Microsoft's *Motocross Madness*, the new Microsoft *Sidewinder Freestyle Pro* is one cool piece of hardware.

What makes the *Sidewinder Freestyle Pro* so unique? The controller utilizes sophisticated solid-state motion-sensing technology to deliver immersive PC game control. Instead of moving a directional pad with your left thumb, you actually tilt the controller in the direction you want to go. Motion sensors inside the controller translate the motions to the screen. For example, if you're playing *Motocross Madness* when you go over a jump and you see that your racer is leaning back in the air, you actually move your controller forward and you'll watch your biker adjust himself. The whole effect is really pretty amazing. The great thing about the *Sidewinder Freestyle Pro* is that it is backwards compatible and works with all types of games.

The Bottom Line: Even though you can only get the controller if you purchase *Motocross Madness*, for $74.99, it's a great deal. Consumers will be getting a great game along with a revolutionary piece of hardware. Look for high sales for this product as Microsoft has already proven itself in the peripheral market.

Tom Ham



Philips DSS370 USB Speakers

Platform: PC
Genre: USB Speakers
Publisher: Philips
Developer: Philips
Available: Now
Wholesale: N/A
MSRP: $199
GW Rating: A-

If there is one significant aspect to Windows 98 and what it has to offer to gamers it is without question USB support. The first product any computer hobbyist will be on the lookout for is either a joystick or a new set of speakers. Philips seems to have answered the demand for the latter with their *DSS370* sound system.

The beauty of USB is plug and play, and the *DSS370* speakers definitely deliver. Set up could not have been any easier. Simply plug in the speakers to a power outlet, hook them up to the subwoofer and let USB take care of the rest. As soon as the system is plugged into the USB port, Windows 98 builds a driver database and installs the software. No installing sound cards. No tearing your computer apart. You get full digital sound in a matter of minutes and the quality is there as well. Philips has placed easy to adjust volume controls on both the right speaker and on the subwoofer (which rocks, by the way). Of course, all of the volume settings can also be adjusted from the desktop. Overall performance was very good, although I did notice some lag or "skipping" problems when opening and closing and programs while listening to an audio CD. However when it came to games the *DSS370* came through with great sound and plenty of bass.

The Bottom Line: Philips has shipped an excellent product, the problem now is educating users to the ways of USB and so far they are hitting the mark by going after the core gamer.

- Reilly Brennan

Scorpion PSX

Platform: PlayStation
Genre: Controller
Publisher: Nyko
Developer: Nyko
Available: Now
Wholesale: N/A
MSRP: $29.99
GW Rating: B+

With the successful introduction of Sony's *Dual Shock Analog Controller*, third-party peripheral companies are all rushing to release their own version of the controller. Nyko is one of the first to market with the *Scorpion PSX*.

The scorpion is surprisingly comfortable. The first thing you notice when you pick it up is how sturdy it feels. The durable build makes it easy to withstand the constant pounding that it's sure to take. Also noticeable is the ergonomic design that fits comfortably in your hands, much more so than Sony's pad. The placement of the buttons are similar to Sony's with one noticeable difference. Instead of two shoulder buttons on each side, the *Scorpion* has one set of shoulder and one set of trigger buttons underneath each handle. In addition, the *Scorpion* includes independent turbo and slow motion buttons.

The force-feedback adaptors built into Nyko's pad provides more of a punch than Sony's. Having played it with *Resident Evil 2* (*Dual Shock* version) the *Scorpion* performed admirably. The only drawback we could find was with the analog sticks which seemed to be a little stiffer than the Sony-made controller.

The Bottom Line: With more third-party companies planning to support the new controller, the *Scorpion* is in a great position to offer consumers a nice alternative to Sony's own *Dual Shock*. The unique design and durable construction should also set it apart from the deluge of controllers hitting the shelves.

- Ben Rinaldi

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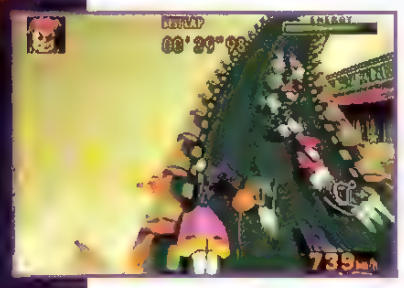
F-ZERO X



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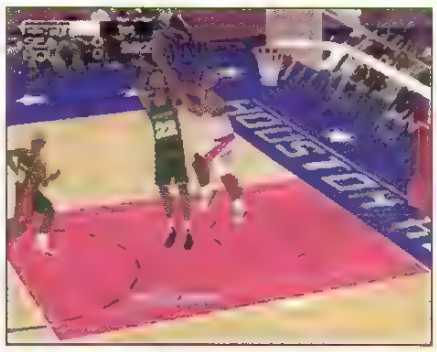

ESPN Digital Games NBA Tonight

Platform: PlayStation, PC
Genre: Sports
Publisher: Radical Entertainment
Developer: Radical Entertainment
Available: October

Armed with the ESPN license, Radical Entertainment is ready to duke it out in the competitive sports arena with the likes of EA and Sony. *NBA Tonight* is the first in a long line of planned sports game employing the ESPN logo and SportsCenter personalities.

Radical's goal for *NBA Tonight* is to create a "playable ESPN broadcast." Using the resources afforded them from the license, developers consulted with coaches, pro players and ESPN anchors for their insight and expertise on how to make an entertaining game. They also went so far as to spend time with ESPN producers to learn their approach to covering sports. What this means for gamers is a broadcast-like experience including "Did You Know?" stats and "Breakdown" segments mixed throughout the game.

The full NBA and NBA Player's Association license ensures that all the real teams, players, statistics and arenas are present. Combined with humorous phrases like "Big MOJO!" and "as cool as the other side of the pillow" from on-air personalities Stuart Scott and Dr. Jack Ramsay, Radical did a great job of re-creating an ESPN telecast. The graphics are nice, especially running in hi-res on the PC, but the control is lacking in some areas.

Radical is going to put plenty of advertising and marketing muscle behind *NBA Tonight* so consumers will know about it. The whole TV style presentation is cool and the ESPN connection is huge, but will it be enough to compete with reigning sports king EA? Probably not this year but Radical's on the right track. If they keep improving from year to year they could be a contender.

- Ben Rinaldi

Apocalypse

Platform: PlaySation
Genre: Action
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Activision
Available: Fall

After numerous delays and redesigns, *Apocalypse* from Activision is finally ready to see the light of day. Combining slick graphics, tight control and Bruce Willis; *Apocalypse* is a third person cinematic action-shooter taking players through 12 levels filled with numerous evil enemies and bosses. Players take on the role of Trey Kincade (Willis) and its up to you to stop the Four Horseman of the Apocalypse. Death, Plague, War and The Beast are roaming the Earth in human disguise, gathering evil force and awaiting the Reverend's signal to destroy humanity. The game features 12 levels of intense shooting combat. Players will fight their way through sewers, prisons, war factories, rooftops, and cemeteries. Trey Kincade has an arsenal of weapons including flame throwers, homing missiles and rockets.

Graphically, Apocalypse is very impressive, even at this preview stage. From the nicely rendered backgrounds and varied environments to the brilliant textures and shading that truly make you feel you're fighting against the scum of the Earth. What makes *Apocalypse* look so good are the animations of the enemies and players. Bruce Willis was even cyberscanned and motion-captured for the game. The game delivers realistic 3D character movements and full 360-degrees of control. The 3D special effects and light sourcing are top-notch. From the torched enemies from your flamethrower to the massive explosions from missile fire, *Apocalypse* is pure eye-candy. Activision has plenty riding on this title, especially with all the delays they've had to deal with. As it looks right now though, Apocalypse should be a major hit.

- Tom Ham

Ninja: Shadow of Darkness

Platform: PlayStation
Genre: Action/Adventure
Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Core
Available: Fall

One of the more popular games at this year's E^3 was at the Eidos booth and it wasn't *Tomb Raider*. It was *Ninja: Shadow of Darkness* from Core Design. Although linear in design and execution, *Ninja: Shadow of Darkness* still exhibits distinct qualities to make it a worthy title.

Players assume the role of Kurosawa, a young Ninja who is drawn into a dark history of demon lords, treacherous landscapes and non-stop action. As Kurosawa, players travel through 12 levels in 4 different worlds in a land of magic spells and special moves. Along the way players collect weapons, gather objects, solve various puzzles and of course, fight. The game is played via a third-person perspective and feels like a hybrid between *Tomb Raider* and *Fighting Force*. One thing is for sure, Core Design knows how to effectively blend good storytelling and gameplay and *Ninja: Shadow of Darkness* is no exception. One would think that with a ninja as your main character, the fighting system would be complex and hard to master. This is not the case with *Ninja: Shadow of Darkness*. Most attacks in the game require only a tap of a button. What also makes *Ninja* unique is the use of magic, so the game is not limited to punching and kicking. As with all Core Design games, the control is excellent and intuitive.

The enemy AI is surprisingly tough and intelligent. Instead of blindly running into your attacks, you'll find them anticipating your move and counterattacking you. Incorporate some impressive in game cut scenes and *Ninja* may prove to be one of the hits of the fall season especially with Eidos marketing the title the way it has.

- Tom Ham

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Sin

Platform: PC
Genre: 3D Shooter
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Ritual
Available: Fall

Probably the most popular genre in computer gaming has got to be the first-person shooter. The past couple of years we have been treated to some incredible first person games including *Unreal*, *Quake II* and *Jedi Knight*. Now the folks at Activision and Ritual Entertainment hope to bring new life into the genre with their latest 3D shooter, *Sin*. If the popularity already generated from the demo release of this title is any indication, *Sin* is going to be a definite hit when its released this fall.

Sin will feature 6 unique missions spread across 24 levels, which are interwoven into an immersive storyline. During development, Ritual Entertainment wanted to have missions with a purpose. Every action your player makes will have a consequence. *Sin's* action-based outcomes add increased replay value as players discover that the choices they make will affect the game's flow. Another key element to the game is reactive AI. If an enemy is taking too much damage, they will retreat and heal themselves and then come after you. Weapons range from your basic shotgun and machine gun to more advanced ones such as a sniper rifle with laser sighting. A key point to mention about *Sin* is the gameplay is not just limited to endless corridors and hallways as in most first-person games. In *Sin*, the action can take players onto rooftops, construction sites and other open areas.

Graphically, *Sin* is nothing short of brilliant. The technology driving the game is id's very own *Quake II* engine, so the problems that plagued *Unreal* when it came to multiplayer shouldn't be an issue here as *Sin* should easily develop an online fanbase.

- Tom Ham

ESPN Digital Games X-Games Pro Boarder

Platform: PlayStation, PC
Genre: Sports
Publisher: Radical Entertainment
Developer: Radical Entertainment
Available: October

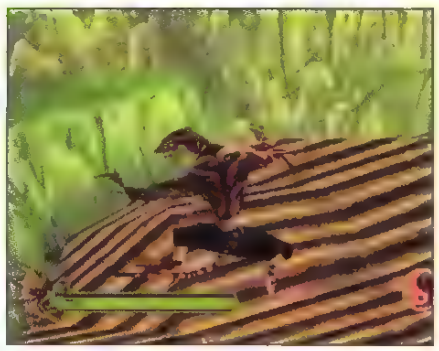
With the popularity of snowboarding sky-rocketing over the past few years it's no surprise that the x-treme sport is being translated to the video game arena. Vancouver-based Radical Entertainment is hard at work on their own version called *X Games Pro Boarder*.

Using the ESPN license, Radical made sure to consult with pro boarders so that every detail of the game reflects the culture and lifestyle of snowboarding. *Pro Boarder* features eight pros (Terje Haakonsen, Tina Basich, Peter Line, etc.) and the latest snowboards from manufacturers like K2, Solomon and Sims to name a few. After you've picked your rider and board it's time to hit the slopes for some intense racing competition in four events including Halfpipe, Boarder X, Big Air, SlopeStyle or Freeride. Competition is fierce as you perform dozens of tricks to win the gold medal from the Winter X Games.

Featuring fully explorable 3D courses, Pro Boarder allows you total freedom to find shortcuts on the mountainside. Sporting some sharp visuals like detailed terrain, realistic snow and nice looking lens flares, Pro Boarder holds its own on the graphics side. At this early stage the control is a little touchy and lining up jumps can be tricky, but the developers promised to fix these problems before its release.

X-Games Pro Boarder is a solid first effort but with snowboarding games being released by Sony (*Cool Boarders 3*), Accolade (*Big Air Snowboarding*) and Capcom (*Free Style Boarding*), the competition on PlayStation is brutal. If Radical can convince consumers that *Pro Boarder* is the one to own this winter then they could have a winner on their hands.

- Ben Rinaldi



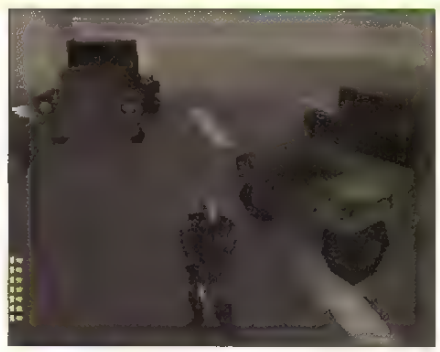
T'ai Fu

Platform: PlayStation
Genre: Action/Adventure
Publisher: Activision
Developer: DreamWorks
Available: Fall

Set in the lush setting of ancient China, *T'ai Fu* is a 3D action/adventure game from Activision and DreamWorks Interactive. In *T'ai Fu*, players take on the role of a kung-fu fighting tiger who is the lone survivor of the Tiger Clan. T'ai is blamed for the savage murder of the Panda Monks and its up to you to master the fighting styles of numerous animal clans in order to defeat the Dragon Master and restore balance to the ancient world.

T'ai Fu features over 20 intense levels of fighting mayhem. Each level is filled with various animal enemies including snakes, monkeys and leopards that fight with super abilities inspired by Chinese legend. Fully animated, AI enemies and bosses require you to master numerous Kung-Fu moves in order to succeed. Other key elements of the gameplay include mastering Chi power including fire, earth and lightining in order to defeat enemies. In total there are over 100 authentic kung-fu moves players can master. They range from your basic throw to maneuvers such as the Crane Hover and the Monkey Roll. One thing that stands out in all previous DreamWorks efforts is the music and sound effects, and *T'ai Fu* continues this tradition with some truly amazing sounds. The graphics in *T'ai Fu* are spectacular. The game makes you feel like you are controlling an animated cartoon instead of a videogame. The lighting and particle effects and seamless animations in the game are fantastic. The environments are beautifully rendered and exotic, complete with sweeping rivers and bamboo forests. Activision is really stepping up their console output and this is the kind of game that will help them do it.

- Tom Ham



WinBack

Platform: Nintendo 64
Genre: Action
Publisher: Koei
Developer: Omega Force
Available: December

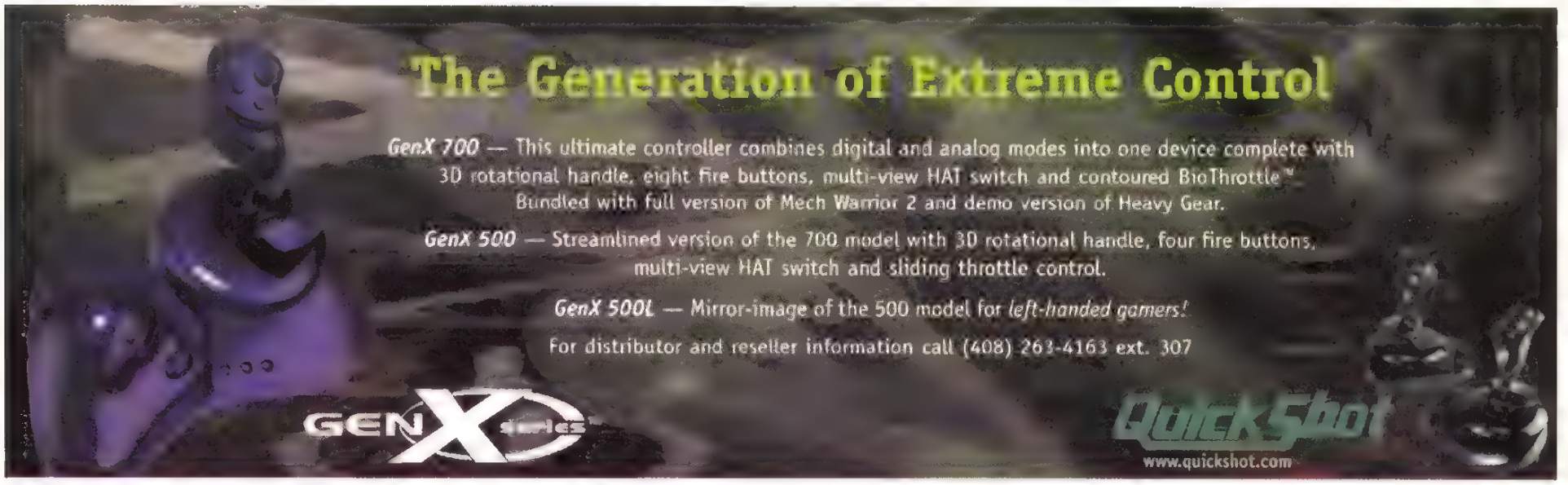
Koei is set to take N64 players on a wild ride of espionage, stealth and danger this winter with its first N64 action game called *WinBack*.

In *WinBack* you play the role of Jean-Luc Couger, an elite operative of S.C.A.T. (Strategic Covert Actions Team). Jean-Luc's mission is to infiltrate the GULF Strategic Satellite System and stop a group of terrorists that have taken control of the center. To achieve your goal in WinBack, you must do more than just run and shoot, you must hide behind crates, creep along walls, silently move through enemy infested quarters and do just about everything else you see in an action-packed Hollywood movie. To do this Koei has given your character more than 350 actions, all carefully designed to be as realistic and human as possible.

Of course there may be times when stealth doesn't work and you need to blast your way out of trouble and in *WinBack* players can use an arsenal of firepower to accomplish this including handguns, shotguns, machine guns, flame throwers and wireless explosives.

Koei has made it a point to give N64 owners a new playing experience and from what we've seen so far they are on the right track. With the success of Nintendo's *GoldenEye* and Infogrames' *Mission: Impossible* there is a clear market for this type of game. With its mission oriented gameplay, laser aiming sights, variety of weapons and stunning 3D environments WinBack could be a sleeper hit of 1998. The game could also piggyback on the success of Konami's Metal Gear Solid for the PlayStation as N64 fans will be looking for a game to call their own.

- Ben Rinaldi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February 9-12

There's this guy going around at parties who used to be just an underling at some game developing company and he brags all evening about going to the French Riviera on business and that, thanks to a stand he had at this trade show in Cannes, he met an interactive media publisher, sold him a game concept, and now has his own company supposedly with offices all over the world.

Well, the guy must be dreaming, because Milia Games didn't exist, yet.

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GameWEEK

May 15, 1998 — The Newspaper of the Interactive Gaming Industry — Volume 4, Issue 9

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WESTWOOD GEARS UP FOR COMMAND & CONQUER 2

By Jason R. Rich

Of all the upcoming games developed by Westwood Studios since 1985, what gamers know best is the Command & Conquer franchise which has topped the list...

Psygnosis To Publish N64 Titles

By Ben Rinaldi

Psygnosis Inc. has announced that they intend to produce games for the Nintendo 64...

Rights to Kain: Soul Reaver in Dispute

By Tom Hale

Silicon Knights, developer of the successful Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain recently filed a temporary restraining order on Federal Court against Crystal Dynamics to halt further production...

WizardWorks' Deer Hunter Bags Big Bucks

By Vince Matthews

PC game developers can be an expensive proposition...

TOP 20 Interactive Entertainment Manufacturers

Ranked By Units Sold, March '98

Feb. Rank	March Rank	Manufacturer
1	1	Sony Corp.
5	4	Interact Accessories
9	5	Midway Home Ent.
8	8	Acclaim
7	10	Konami
11	12	Mad Catz
12	14	Fanatec Interactive
10	15	Crystal Dynamics
17	16	Accolade
16	20	Interplay

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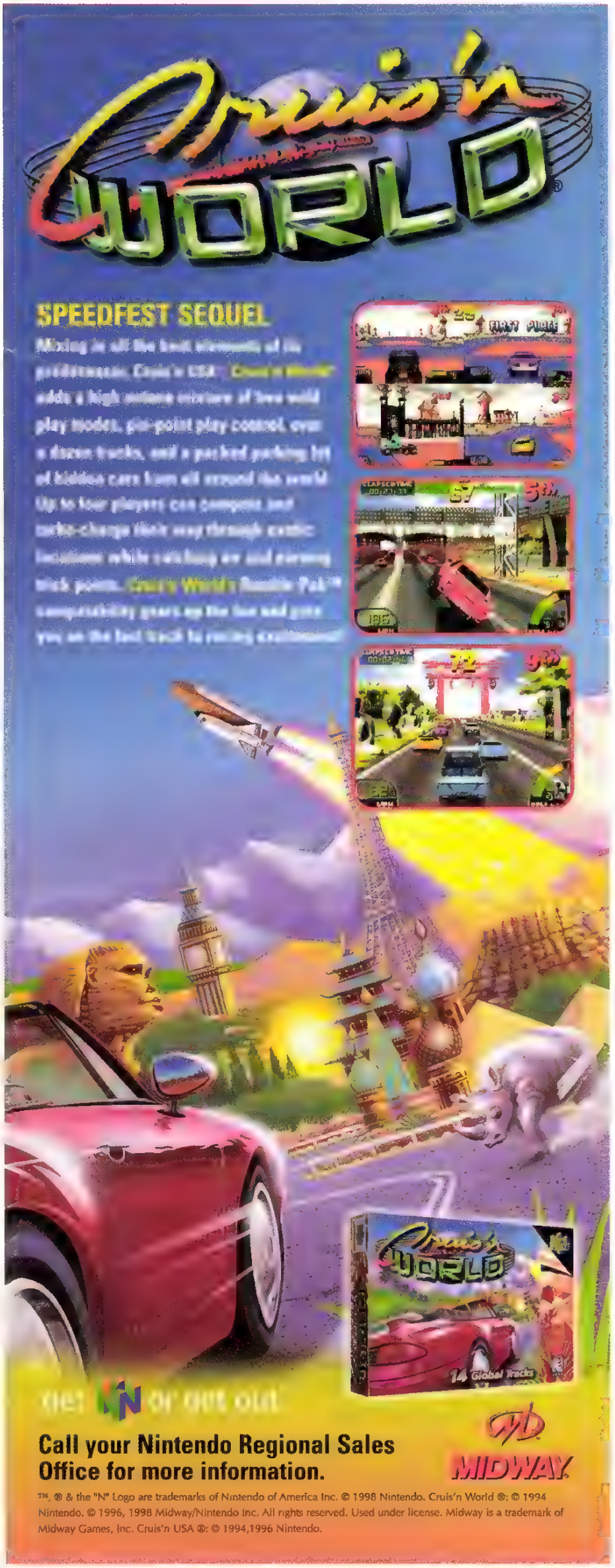
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Release Schedule

Product Title	Manufacturer/ Publisher	Product Genre/Type	Pre-Book Date	EST Ship Date
GAME BOY				
A Bug's Life	THQ	Adventure	TBA	Q4
Bomberman Pocket	Nintendo	Action	10/98	11/98
Conker's Pocket Tales	Nintendo	Adventure	11/98	12/26/98
Duck Tales 2	Nintendo	Adventure	9/98	10/12/98
Final Fantasy Adventure	Sunsoft	Role Playing	TBA	Q4
Final Fantasy Legend	Sunsoft	Role Playing	TBA	Q4
Final Fantasy Legend II	Sunsoft	Role Playing	TBA	Q4
Game & Watch Gallery II	Nintendo	Action	TBA	11/98
Pokemon	Nintendo	Role Playing	9/98	9/98
Rugrats	THQ	Action	11/98	12/98
Smurf	Nintendo	Action	9/98	10/12/98
Small Soldiers	THQ	Action	9/98	10/98
Snoopy's Magic Show	Nintendo	Adventure	9/98	10/16/98
The Lost World: Jurassic Park	THQ	Action/Adv.	10/98	11/98
Top Gear Pocket	Kemco	Racing	10/98	11/98
Turox 2	Acclaim	Action	9/98	10/98
Yoda Stories	THQ	Adventure	10/98	11/98
GAME.COM				
Resident Evil 2	Tiger Electronics	Action	Now	10/98
MACINTOSH				
Age of Empires	MacSoft	Strategy	TBA	Q1 '99
Civilization II Gold Edition	MacSoft	Strategy	TBA	Q4
Dark Vengeance	MacSoft	Strategy	TBA	Q4
Defiance	Logicware	Action	TBA	10/98
Falcon 4.0	MacSoft	Simulation	TBA	Q4
Myth 2: Soulblighter	Bungie	Strategy	9/98	10/98
Play This, Play That:: Darts	Patch Products	Action	9/98	11/98
Star Trek: Klingon Honor Guard	MacSoft	Adventure	TBA	Q4
Star Treck: Birth of the Federation	MacSoft	Adventure	TBA	Q1 '99
Redneck Rampage	Logicware	Action	TBA	11/98
NINTENDO 64				
Air-Boardin' USA	ASCII	Racing	9/98	10/98
All-Star Tennis	Ubi Soft	Sports	TBA	Q4
Army Men	3DO	Strategy	TBA	12/98
Asteroids	Crave	Action	TBA	Q4
Battle Tanx	3DO	Action	TBA	Q4
Body Harvest	Midway	Strategy	9/98	10/22/98
Bomberman Hero	Nintendo	Adventure	9/98	10/20/98
Buck Bumble	Ubi Soft	Action	9/98	10/1/98
Caesar's Palace	Crave	Gambling	9/98	10/98
California Speed	Midway	Racing	TBA	Q1 '99
Castlevania	Konami	Adventure	TBA	Q1 '99
Charlie Blast's Territory	Microware	Action	9/98	10/98
Cruis'n World	Nintendo	Racing	8/98	9/29/98
Duke Nukem: Zero Hour	GT Interactive	Action	TBA	12/98
Earthbound 64	Nintendo	Role Playing	TBA	Q2 '99
Earthworm Jim 3D	Interplay/Vis	Action	10/98	11/30/98
Extreme G2	Acclaim	Racing	10/98	11/98
Fighting Force 64	Eidos	Fighting	9/98	10/13/98
Flying Dragon	Culture Brain	Fighting	9/98	10/98
FIFA Soccer '99	EA Sports	Sports	10/98	11/98
Fox Sports College Hoops '99	Fox Interactive	Sports	10/98	11/98
F-Zero X	Nintendo	Racing	9/98	10/27/98
Gauntlet 3D	Midway	Adventure	TBA	Q1 '99
Glover	Hasbro	Action	TBA	Q3
Harrier 2000	Mc O'River	Flying	TBA	Q4
Hercules: The Legendary Journeys	Titus Soft	Action	TBA	Q4
Hybrid Heaven	Konami	Action/RPG	TBA	Q1 '99
Hype - The Time Quest	Ubi Soft	Adventure	11/98	12/98
In-Fisherman Bass Hunter	Take 2	Sports	11/98	12/98
Jeff Gordon Racing	ASC Games	Racing	TBA	Q2 '99
Jest	Ocean	Action	TBA	Q4
Jet Force Gemini	Nintendo/Rare	Action	TBA	Q1 '99
Jungle Strike 64	THQ	Action	TBA	Q1 '99

Product Title	Manufacturer/ Publisher	Product Genre/Type	Pre-Book Date	EST Ship Date
Knife Edge: Nose Gunner	Kemco	Shooter	TBA	Q4
Legend of the River King	Electro Source	Sports	TBA	Q4
Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time	Nintendo	Adventure	10/98	11/24/98
Lego Racers	Lego Media	Racing	TBA	Q1 '99
Lode Runner 64	Banda	Adventure	TBA	Q1 '99
Looney Tunes: Space Race	Infogrames	Racing	TBA	Q1 '99
Magical Tetris Featuring Mickey	Capcom	Puzzle	TBA	Q4
Micro Machines V3	Midway	Racing	10/98	11/24/98
Milo's Astro Lanes	Natsume	Action	10/98	11/2/98
NBA Live '99	Electronic Arts	Sports	TBA	Q4
NBA Jam '99	Acclaim	Sports	10/98	11/98
NFL Blitz	Midway	Sports	9/98	10/2/98
NHL '99	EA Sports	Sports	TBA	Q4
Nightmare Creatures	Activision	Adventure	11/98	12/98
ODT	Psygnosis	Action	TBA	Q4
Ogre Battle 3	Quest	Role Playing	TBA	Q2 '99
Penny Racers	THQ	Racing	TBA	10/98
Perfect Dark	Nintendo/Rare	Adventure	TBA	Q2 '99
Pokemon Stadium	Nintendo	Simulation	TBA	Q1 '99
Quake II	Activision	3D Shooter	10/98	11/98
Quest for Camelot	Titus	Adventure	TBA	Q3
Rayman 64	Ubi Soft	Adventure	TBA	Q4
Roadsters '98	Titus Soft	Racing	10/98	11/98
Ronaldo Soccer	Infogrames	Sports	TBA	Q4
Rugrats	THQ	Adventure	TBA	Q4
Rush 2: Extreme Racing USA	Midway	Racing	10/98	11/4/98
S.C.A.R.S	Ubi Soft	Racing	TBA	Q4
ShadowGate	Kemco	Role Playing	TBA	Q4
Shadow Man	Acclaim	Action	TBA	Q1 '99
South Park 64	Acclaim	Action	TBA	Q1 '99
Space Circus	Infogrames	Action	TBA	Q4
SpaceStation: Silicon Valley	Take 2	Adventure	TBA	10/98
StarCraft	Nintendo	Strategy	TBA	Q2 '99
Star Wars: Rogue Squadron	LucasArts	Action	10/98	11/2/98
Superman: The Animated Series	Titus	Adventure	10/98	11/2/98
Super Mario RPG 2	Nintendo	RPG	TBA	Q1 '99
Tonic Trouble	Ubi Soft	Platformer	9/98	10/30/98
Top Gear Overdrive	Kemco	Racing	10/98	11/98
Turok 2: Seeds of Evil	Acclaim	3D Shooter	TBA	Q4
Twelve Tales: Conker 64	Rare	Action	9/98	10/4/98
Twisted Edge Snowboarding	Kemco	Sports	9/98	10/29/98
V-Rally '98 Championship Edition	Infogrames	Racing	TBA	Q4
Wayne Gretzky Hockey '99	Midway	Sports	10/98	11/98
WCW/NWO Revenge	THQ	Fighting	9/98	10/98
WinBack	KOEI	Action	TBA	12/98
Wipeout 64	Psygnosis	Racing	10/98	11/98
Vigilante 8	Activision	Racing/Combat	TBA	12/98
VR Pool	Crave	Simulation	TBA	Q4
Xena: Warrior Princess	Titus	Adventure	TBA	Q1 '99
PC				
3D Ultra NASCAR Pinball	Dynamix	Pinball Sim.	TBA	11/98
10 Six	Sega Soft	Adventure	TBA	Q1 '99
10th Planet	Bethesda Softworks	Strategy	9/98	10/98
20,000 Leagues Under the Sea	SouthPeak	Adventure	TBA	Q1 '99
Age of Empires II	Microsoft	Strategy	TBA	Q2 '99
Alien Vs. Predator	Fox Interactive	Action	8/98	9/98
Alpha Centaur	Electronic Arts	Strategy	TBA	Q2 '99
Anachronox	Eidos	Action	TBA	Q2 '99
Apache Havoc	Empire Interactive	Simulation	10/98	11/98
Asheron's Call	Microsoft	Adventure	TBA	Q1 '99
Asteroids	Activision	Shooter	9/98	10/30/98
Baja 1000 Racing	Red Orb	Racing	10/98	11/98
Battle of Britain	TalonSoft	Startegy	TBA	11/98
Beneath	Activision	Adventure	TBA	Q1 '99
Big Brother	MediaX	Action	TBA	10/98
Blood 2	GT Interactive	3D Shoote	9/98	10/2/98
Caesar 3	Sierra	Strategy	9/98	9/30/98
Canal Soccer 99	Infogrames	Sports	10/98	11/98
Carmageddon 2	Interplay	Action	9/98	10/98
Centipede 3D	Hasbro Interactive	Action	9/98	10/98
Command & Conquer Tiberian Sun	Westwood	Strategy	9/98	10/16/98
Confirmed Kill	Eidos	Action	9/98	10/98
Conflict of Nations	Sega Ent.	Strategy	10/98	11/98
Daikatana	Eidos	Action	11/98	12/16/98
Dark Side of the Moon	Southpeak	Adventure	10/98	11/98
Dark Vengeance	GT Interactive	Adventure	10/98	11/98
Dawn of War	Virgin Interactive	Strategy	10/98	11/98
Dead Ball Zone	GT Interactive	Action	9/98	10/98
Dead Unity	THQ	Action	9/98	10/15/97
Deer Hunter 2	WizardWorks	Simulation	TBA	Q4
Delta Force	NovaLogic	Action	9/98	10/98
Descent 3	Interplay	Action	9/98	10/98
DethKarz	Melbourne House	Driving	9/98	10/98

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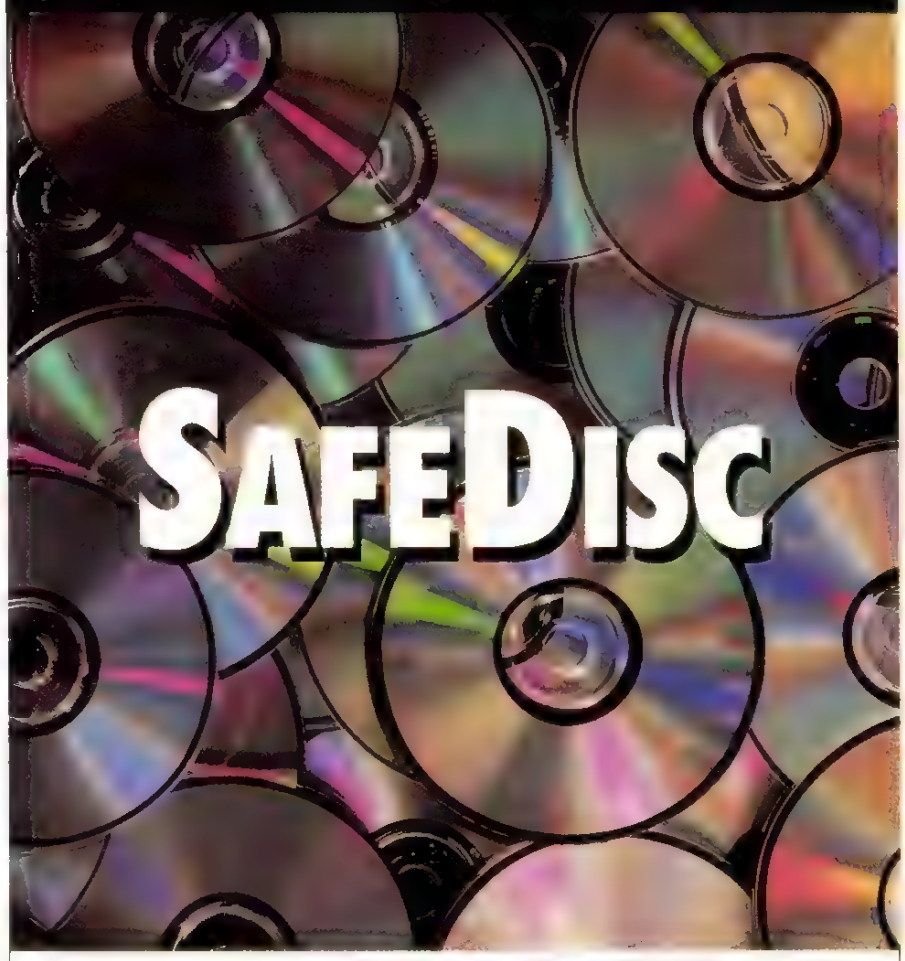
D-Jump	Ubi Soft	Action	10/98	11/98
Dominant Species	Red Storm	Strategy	9/98	10/98
Duke Nukem Forever	Apogee	3D Shooter	TBA	Q2 '99
Dungeon Keeper 2	Electronic Arts	Strategy	9/98	10/98
Earthworm Jim 3D	Interplay	Action	10/98	11/98
ESPN National Hockey Night	Radical Ent.	Sports	TBA	Q4
ESPN NBA Tonight	Radical Ent	Sports	TBA	10/98
ESPN X Games Pro Boarder	Radical Ent.	Sports	9/98	10/98
EverQuest	Sony Interactive	RPG	8/98	9/30/98
Evolva	Virgin Interactive	Action	8/98	9/98
Expert Pool	Psygnosis	Sports	TBA	Q1 '99
Extreme Warfare	Red Orb	Strategy	9/98	10/98
Fallout 2	Interplay	Role Playing	9/98	10/98
Fatal Abyss	SegaSoft	Action	9/98	10/98
Fighter Duel 2.0	Infogrames	Simulation	10/98	11/98
Fighter Squadron	Activision	Simulation	8/98	9/30/98
Final Countdown	Impact Publishing	Action	11/98	12/98
FLY!	GOD	Simulation	10/98	11/98
Formula 1 '98	Psygnosis	Racing	9/98	10/98
Gabriel Knight 3	Sierra	Adventure	TBA	Q4
Giants	Interplay	Action	TBA	Q1 '99
Global Domination	Psynosis	Adventure	10/98	11/98
Grim Fandango	Lucas Arts	Action	8/98	9/21/98
Half-Life	Sierra	3D Shooter	TBA	Q3
Heavy Gear 2	Activision	Action	10/98	11/16/98
Heretic 2	Activision	Adventure	9/98	10/30/98
Heroes of Might & Magic III	3DO	Role Playing	TBA	Q4
Hexplore	Infogrames	Role-Playing	10/98	11/98
Homeworld	Sierra	Strategy	TBA	Q4
House of the Dead	Sega Ent.	Action	TBA	Q4
Hype - The Time Quest	Ubi Soft	Adventure	TBA	Q4
Indiana Jones	LucasArts	Action	TBA	Q1 '99
International Rally Championship	THQ	Racing	TBA	10/16/98
Interstate 82	Activision	Racing	10/98	11/98
Jack Nicklaus	Activision	Golf	10/98	11/16/98
Jagged Alliance 2	Sirtech	Strategy	TBA	Q4
Kings Quest Mask of Eternity	Sierra	Adventure	10/98	11/2/98
Klingon Honor Guard	Microprose	Action	10/98	11/98
Kuba	Patch	Board Game	TBA	Q4
Lands of Lore 3	Westwood Studios	Role Playing	10/98	11/16/98
Legend of the Five Rings	Activision	Role Playing	TBA	Q4
Lego Creator	Lego Media	Children	TBA	Q4
Lego Loco	Lego Media	Children	TBA	Q4
Links Extreme	Access Software	Golf	8/98	10/24/98
Lords of Magic	Sierra	Adventure	9/98	9/30/98
Madden NFL '99	Electronic Arts	Sports	9/98	10/98
Magic	Interactive Magic	Action	TBA	Q3
Mechwarrior 3	MicroProse	Adventure	9/98	10/98
Messiah	Shiny/Interplay	Adventure	TBA	Q1 '99
MiG 29 Fulcrum	NovaLogic	Flight Sim	9/98	10/98
Morpheus	Prahna	Action	9/98	10/98
Moto Racer 2	Electronic Arts	Racing	TBA	10/14/98
Myth 2: Soulblighter	Bungie	Strategy	9/98	10/98
NASCAR Racing 3	Sierra	Racing	10/98	11/16/98
Need For Speed II	Electronic Arts	Racing	7/98	8/98
NFL Blitz	Midway	Sports	8/98	9/98
NFL Gameday 99	989 Studios	Football	10/98	11/98
NHL '99	Electronic Arts	Sports	9/98	10/98
North vs. South	Interactive Magic	Strategy	TBA	Q4
Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus	GT Interactive	Adventure	10/98	11/98
ODT	Psygnosis	Action	TBA	Q3
Omikron: The Nomad Soul	Eidos Interactive	Action	10/98	11/98
Outcast	Infogrames	Action	TBA	Q3
Powerslide	GT Interactive	Racing	10/98	11/98
Prey	3D/Realms	3D Shooter	TBA	Q2 '99
Pro Pilot 99	Sierra	Flight Sim	9/98	10/1/98
Pro Pinball: Big Race USA	Empire Interactive	Arcade	10/98	11/98
Quake 2 Mission Pack 2	Activision	3D Shooter	9/98	10/30/98
Quest For Glory 5: Dragonfire	Sierra	Adventure	9/98	10/1/98
Rayman 2	UbiSoft Entertainment	Adventure	9/98	10/98
Rebel Moon Revolution	GT	Adventure	10/98	11/98
Redline	Accolade	Driving/Combat	TBA	Q4
Requiem: Wrath of the Fallen	3DO	3D Shooter	10/98	11/98
Return Fire II	MGM Interactive	Action	TBA	Q3
Return To Krondor	Sierra	Adventure	10/98	11/15/98
Road to Moscow	I-Magic	Simulation	TBA	Q4
Sabrina	Cendant	Adventure	TBA	Q4
SCARS	UbiSoft	Racing	9/98	10/98
Sega Rally 2	Sega Ent.	Racing	10/98	11/98
Settlers III	Blue Byte	Strategy	TBA	Q4
Shadowman	Acclaim	Action	10/98	11/98
Shadowpact	Blue Byte	Strategy	10/98	11/98
Shadowrun	FASA Interactive	Action	9/98	10/98
ShatteredLight	Simon & Schuster	Role Playing	TBA	1/99

Product Title	Manufacturer/ Publisher	Product Genre/Type	Pre-Book Date	EST Ship Date
Shattered Reality	KO Interactive	Action	10/98	11/98
Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri	Electronics Arts	Action	TBA	Q2 '99
SimCity 3000	Maxis	City Builder Sim	TBA	Q4
Sin	Activision	3D Shooter	8/98	9/98
Skies	SegaSoft	Role-playing	TBA	Q2 '99
Slave Zero	Accolade	Action	TBA	Q2 '99
Space Bunnies Must Die	Panasonic	Action	8/98	9/15/98
Space Circus	Infogrames	Adventure	10/98	11/98
Spaerhead	Interactive Magic	Action	TBA	Q3
Speed Busters	UbiSoft	Racing	9/98	10/98
Speed Tribes	THQ	Adventure	10/98	11/15/98
Sportscar Supreme GT	Virgin Interactive	Racing	9/98	10/98
StarCon	Accolade	Action	TBA	Q2 '99
Sierra Sports Basketball Pro 99	Sierra	Sports	11/98	12/2/98
Sierra Sports Football Pro 99	Sierra	Sports	9/98	10/16/98
Sierra Sports Skiing '99	Sierra	Sports	9/98	10/15/98
Starsiege	Dynamix	Adventure	9/98	10/2/98
Starsiege: Tribes	Sierra	Action	9/98	10/98
Star Trek: Birth of the Federation	Micropose	Strategy	TBA	Q4
Star Trek: Creator	Simon & Schuster	Creativity	TBA	Q4
Star Trek: Klingon Academy	Interplay	Adventure	10/98	11/98
Star Wars: Rogue Squadron	LucasArts	Action	10/98	11/2/98
Starwulf	Intense Entertainment	Simulation	TBA	Q1 '99
Striker	Rage Software	Action	9/98	10/98
Swords and Sorcery	Virgin	Adventure	9/98	10/2/98
Test Drive 5	Accolade	Racing	10/98	11/98
Test Drive Off Road 2	Accolade	Racing	10/98	11/98
Theocracy	Interactive Magic	Strategy	TBA	Q4
Thief : Dark Project	Eidos	Adventure	9/98	10/16/98
Tides of War	GT Interactive	Strategy	8/98	9/98
Tiger Woods '99	Electronic Arts	Golf	8/98	9/98
Tom Clancy's ruthless.com	Red Storm	Strategy	10/98	11/98
Tomb Raider 3	Eidos Interactive	Action	10/98	11/98
Tonic Trouble	Ubi Soft	Platformer	TBA	Q3
Total Annihilation Kingdoms	GT Interactive	Strategy	10/98	11/98
Trans Am Racing	GT Interactive	Racing	10/98	11/98
Trespasser: Jurassic Park	DreamWorks	3D Shooter	9/98	10/98
Turok 2	Acclaim	3D Shooter	9/98	10/98
Ultima: Ascension	Electronic Arts	Role Playing	10/98	11/98
Ultra Fighters	Interactive Magic	Flight Sim	TBA	Q4
Uprising 2	3DO	Strrategy	9/98	10/98
V-Rally	Infogrames	Racing	10/98	11/98
Vigilance	SegaSoft	3D Shooter	9/98	10/98
Virtual Knex	Fox Interactive	Adventure	TBA	Q4
Vulcan Fury	Interplay	Adventure	9/98	10/2/98
WARGASM	Infogrames	Action	TBA	Q4
War of the Wolrds	GT Interactive	Adventure	9/98	10/98
WCW Nitro	THQ	Fighting	TBA	Q4
Wings of Destiny	Pysgnosis	Simulation	TBA	Q2 99
Wizardry 8	Sir-Tech	Role Playing	TBA	Q1 99
Wheel of Time	GT Interactive	3D Shooter	TBA	Q1 99
Vegas Wrath	Future Primitive	Action	10/98	11/98
Yoot's Tower	Sega Ent.	Strategy	9/98	10/98
PC (3Dfx Enhanced Titles)				
10-Six	SegaSoft	Action/Strategy	TBA	Q1 '99
10th Planet	Bethesda Softworks	Strategy	9/98	10/98
Alien Resurrection	Fox Interactive	Action	8/98	9/98
Asheron's Call	Microsoft Games	Role-Playing	TBA	Q1 99
Baja 1000 Racing	Red Orb	Racing	10/98	11/98
Big Brother	Media X	Action	TBA	10/98
Canal Soccer 99	Infogrames	Sports	10/98	11/98
Carmageddon 2	Interplay	Action	9/98	10/98
Centipede 3D	Hasbro Interactive	Action	9/98	10/98
Confirmed Kill	Eidos Interactive	Action	9/98	10/98
Daikatana	Eidos Interactive	3D Shooter	11/98	12/16/98
Dead Unity	THQ	Action	TBA	Q1 '99
Descent III	Interplay	Action	9/98	10/98
DethKarz	Melbourne House	Driving	9/98	10/98
D-Jump	Ubi Soft	Action	10/98	11/98
Duke Nukem Forever	GT Interactive	3D Shooter	TBA	Q2 '99
Dungeon Keeper 2	Electronic Arts	Strategy	9/98	10/98
Enemy Zero	Sega Ent.	Adventure	9/98	10/98
ESPN National Hockey Night	Radical Ent.	Sports	TBA	Q4
ESPN NBA Tonight	Radical Ent.	Sports	TBA	10/98
ESPN X-Games Pro Boarder	Radical Ent.	Sports	9/98	10/98
Excession	THQ	Action	TBA	Q2 '99
Extreme Warfare	Red Orb	Strategy	9/98	10/98
Fatal Abyss	SegaSoft	Action	9/98	10/98
Fighter Duel 2.0	Infogrames	Simulation	10/98	11/98
Final Countdown	mpact Publishing	Action	11/98	12/98
FLY!	G.O.D	Simulation	10/98	11/98
Formula 1 '98	Psygnosis	Racing	9/98	10/98
Giants	Interplay	Action	TBA	Q1 '99

The three billion dollar a year business of CD-ROM piracy is about to hit a serious production problem.



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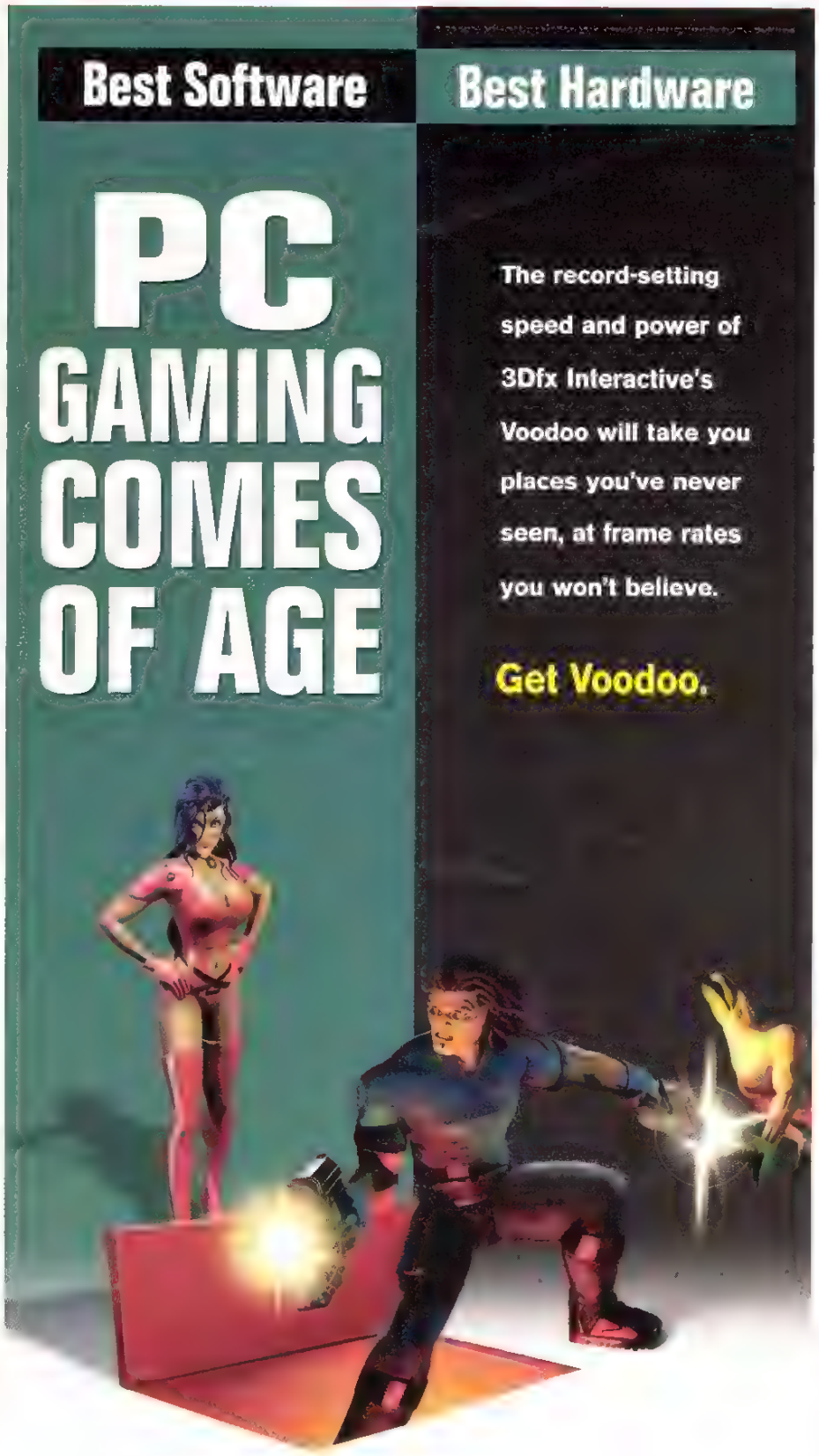
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Product Title	Manufacturer/ Publisher	Product Genre/Type	Pre-Book Date	EST Ship Date
Global Domination	Psygnosis	Strategy	10/98	11/98
Grand Prix Legends	Sierra	Racing	9/98	10/98
Half-Life	Sierra	3D Shooter	9/98	10/98
Heavy Gear 2	Activision	Action	10/98	11/16/98
Heretic 2	Activision	Action	10/98	11/98
Homeworld	Sierra	Strategy	9/98	10/30/98
House of the Dead	Sega Ent.	Action	TBA	Q4
Interstate '82	Activision	Action	10/98	11/98
Klingon Academy	Interplay	Action	10/98	11/98
Klingon Honor Guard	Microprose	Action	10/98	11/98
Madden NFL '99	Electronic Arts	Sports	9/98	10/98
MechWarrior 3	Microprose	Action	9/98	10/98
Messiah	Interplay	Action	TBA	Q1 99
Moto Racer 2	Electronic Arts	Racing	9/98	10/98
Motocross Madness	Microsoft Games	Racing	9/98	10/98
Myth 2: Soulblighter	Bungie	Strategy	9/98	10/98
NCAA Football 99	Electronic Arts	Sports	9/98	10/98
NFL Gameday '99	Sony Interactive	Sports	10/98	11/98
NHL 99	Electronic Arts	Sports	9/98	10/98
O.D.T.	Psygnosis	Action	9/98	10/98
Omikron: The Nomad Soul	Eidos Interactive	Action	10/98	11/98
PowerSlide	GT Interactive	Racing	8/98	9/98
Quake II	Activision	Shooter	TBA	Q1 '99
Rayman 2	UbiSoft	Adventure	9/98	10/98
RC Racer	Fox Interactive	Racing	9/98	10/7/98
Redline	Accolade	Action	8/98	9/98
Relativity	SegaSoft	Adventure	8/98	9/98
Requiem: Wrath of the Fallen	3DO	3D Shooter	9/98	10/98
Return Fire 2	MGM Interactive	Action	8/98	9/98
Return to Krondor	Sierra	Adventure	9/98	10/98
SCARS	UbiSoft	Racing	9/98	10/98
Sega Rally 2	Sega	Racing	10/98	11/98
Shadowman	Acclaim	Action	10/98	11/98
Shadowpact	Blue Byte Software	Adventure	10/98	11/98
Shadowrun	FASA Interactive	Action	9/98	10/98
Shattered Reality	KO Interactive	Action	10/98	11/98
Speed Busters	UbiSoft	Racing	9/98	10/98
Sportscar Supreme GT	Virgin Interactive	Racing	9/98	10/98
StarCon	Accolade	Action	11/98	10/98
Striker	Rage Software	Action	9/98	10/98
Swords and Sorcery	Virgin Interactive	Role-Playing	9/98	10/98
Test Drive 5	Accolade	Racing	10/98	11/98
Test Drive Offroad 2	Accolade	Racing	10/98	11/98
Thief: The Dark Project	Eidos Interactive	3D Shooter	9/98	10/16/98
Tiger Woods '99	Electronic Arts	Sports	8/98	9/98
Tomb Raider 3	Eidos Interactive	Action	10/98	11/98
Tresspasser	DreamWorks	3D Shooter	10/98	11/98
Turok 2	Acclaim	3D Shooter	9/98	10/98
Ultima Ascension	Electronic Arts	Role-Playing	10/98	11/98
Uprising 2	3DO	Strategy	9/98	10/98
Vigilance	SegaSoft	Action	9/98	10/98
V-Rally	Infogrames	Racing	10/98	11/98
WARGASM	Infogrames	Action	TBA	Q4
War of The Worlds	GT Interactive	Action	TBA	10/24/98
WCW Nitro	THQ	Fighting	TBA	Q4
Wheel of Fortune	Hasbro	Sim	TBA	10/4/98
Wheel of Time	GT Interactive	3D Shooter	TBA	Q1 99
Wizardry 8	Sir-Tech Software	Role-Playing	10/98	11/98
Wrath	Future Primitive	Action	10/98	11/98
PLAYSTATION				
A Bug's Life	Disney/Sony	Action	TBA	11/98
Activision Classics	Activision	Compilation	9/98	10/98
Alien Resurrection	Fox Interactive	Action	TBA	Q4
Apocalypse	Activision	Action	10/98	11/3/98
Armored Core 2	ASCII	Action	TBA	10/98
Army Men 3D	3DO	Action	TBA	Q4
Assault	Midway	Action	TBA	10/98
Asteroids	Activision	Shooter	8/98	9/98
Back Street Billiards	ASCII	Simulation	9/98	10/98
Big Air Snowboarding	Accolade	Snowboarding	10/98	11/98
Black Bass w/Blue Marlin	Hot B	Sports	9/98	10/98
Bomberman World	Atlus	Action	9/98	10/98
Brave Fencer Mushashi	EA Square	Fighting	10/98	11/6/98
Bushido Blade 2	EA Square	Fighting	9/98	10/3/98
Bust-a-Groove	Sony	Action	11/98	12/98
Caesar's 2	Interplay	Gambling Sim	9/98	10/98
Centipede	Hasbro	Action	9/98	10/98
Cool Boarders 3	Sony	Sports	9/98	10/28/98
Clock Tower 2	ASCII	Adventure	9/98	10/98
Crash Bandicoot 3	Sony	Action	10/98	11/4/98
Dark stalkers 3	Capcom	Fighting	TBA	12/98
Dead in the Water	ASC Games	Racing	TBA	10/98
Dead Unity	THQ	Action	8/98	9/23/98

Product Title	Manufacturer/ Publisher	Product Genre/Type	Pre-Book Date	EST Ship Date
Deception 2	Tecmo	Adventure	9/98	10/98
Destrega	KOEI	Fighting	TBA	1/99
Dragon Seeds	Jaleco	Fighting	9/98	10/98
Duke Nukem: Time to Kill	GT Interactive	3D Shooter	TBA	9/29/98
Earth Worm Jim 3D	Interplay	Adventure	TBA	Q4
Elmo's Letter Adventure	NewKidCo	Education	TBA	11/98
Elmo's Number Journey	NewKidCo	Education	TBA	11/98
ESPN National Hockey Night	Radical Ent.	Sports	TBA	Q4
ESPN NBA Tonight	Radical Ent.	Sports	TBA	10/98
ESPN X-Games Pro Boarder	Radical Ent.	Sports	9/98	10/98
Fifth Element	Activision	Action	TBA	Q4
Formula 1 '98	Psygnosis	Racing	TBA	10/98
FreeStyle Boarding '99	Capcom	Sports	TBA	Q1 '99
Front Mission 2	Square	Strategy	TBA	TBD
Global Domination	Psygnosis	Strategy	TBA	11/98
International Rally Champ.	THQ	Racing	8/98	9/98
Jeopardy	Hasbro	Sim	9/98	10/98
Knockout Kings	Electronic Arts	Sports	9/98	10/21/98
Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver	Crystal Dynamics	Adventure	TBA	Q4
Lunar Silver Star Story	Working Design	Role Playing	TBA	10/16/98
MediEvil	Sony	Action	9/98	10/21/98
Metal Gear Solid	Konami	Action	TBA	9/22/98
Monkey Hero	Take 2	Action	TBA	11/98
Moto Racer 2	Electronic Arts	Racing	TBA	10/7/98
Motorhead	Fox Interactive	Racing	TBA	10/98
NASCAR '99	Electronic Arts	Sports	8/98	9/29/98
NBA Live '99	Electronic Arts	Sports	TBA	Q4
NBA Shootout '99	989 Studios	Sports	TBA	10/98
NCAA Gamebreaker '99	989 Studios	Sports	TBA	11/98
NHL '99	Electronic Arts	Sports	8/98	10/23/98
NHL Faceoff '99	989 Studios	Sports	9/98	10/07/98
NFL Blitz	Midway	Sports	TBA	9/30/98
Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus	GT Interactive	Adventure	10/98	11/98
ODT	Psygnosis	Action	TBA	11/98
Poy Poy 2	Konami	Puzzle	11/98	12/98
Psybadek	Psygnosis	Action	10/98	11/11/98
Quake II	Activision	Shooter	10/98	11/98
Rally Cross 2	Sony	Racing	TBA	12/98
Resident Evil: DC Dual Shock	Capcom	Action	9/98	10/98
Resident Evil 2 Dual Shock	Capcom	Action	9/98	10/98
Rival Schools	Capcom	Fighting	9/98	10/98
Rogue Trip	GT Interactive	Action	9/98	10/98
Rugrats	THQ	Adventure	9/98	10/16/98
Rushdown	Canal+	Racing	TBA	10/98
Shao Lin	THQ	Fighting	TBA	Q1 '99
Silhouette Mirage	Working Designs	Action	TBA	10/98
Small Soldiers	Electronic Arts	Action	9/98	10/28/98
Sportscar Supreme GT	Virgin	Racing	TBA	Q4
StarCon	Accolade	Action	10/98	11/98
Streak	GT Interactive	Racing	10/98	11/98
Street Fighter Collection 2	Capcom	Fighting	10/98	11/98
Syphon Filter	Sony	Action	10/98	11/98
Tails of Destiny	Namco	Role Playing	10/98	11/98
Tarzan	Disney	Adventure	TBA	Q4
Tai Fu	Activision	Action	TBA	11/98
Team Losi RC Racing	Fox Interactive	Racing	9/98	10/98
Test Drive 5	Accolade	Racing	9/98	10/98
Test Drive Off Road 2	Accolade	Racing	10/98	11/98
Thrill Kill	Virgin	Fighting	9/98	10/2/98
Tiger Woods '99	Electronic Arts	Sports	10/98	11/11/98
Tiny Tank	MGM Interactive	Action	TBA	Q4
Tomb Raider 3	Eidos	Adventure	10/98	11/17/98
Tomorrow Never Dies	MGM Interactive	Action	TBA	Q1 '99
Twisted Metal 3	Sony	Action	TBA	Q4
Uprising X	3DO	Strategy	TBA	Q4
Warrick Dunn VR Football	Interplay	Sports	8/98	9/98
WCW/NWO Thunder	THQ	Fighting	TBA	Q1 '99
Xenogears	EA Square	Action	10/98	11/6/98

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Publishers/Manufacturers

EXCH	TICKER	COMPANY	52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	P/E RATIO	07/31/98 CLOSE	08/14/98 CLOSE	% CHANGE IN PERIOD IN YEAR	% CHANGE
NASD	TDFX	3Dfx	35.25	12.37	10.7	14.31	13.00	-9.17%	-42.22%
NASD	THDO	3DO	4.12	1.93	350.0	3.19	3.50	9.80%	60.00%
NASD	AKLM	Acclaim	8.18	2.93	-	5.69	6.78	19.23%	87.07%
NASD	ATVI	Activision	18.62	9.37	-	12.63	11.38	-9.90%	-36.36%
NASD	AAPL	Apple Comp.	41.00	12.75	270.0	34.63	40.50	16.97%	208.57%
NASD	BROD	Broderbund	37.75	15.25	-	21.00	20.88	-0.60%	-18.54%
NYSE	CD	Cendant Corp.	41.68	13.75	33.5	17.31	17.06	-1.44%	-50.36%
NYSE	CPQ	Compaq Comp.	39.75	23.12	-	32.81	34.81	6.10%	23.23%
NASD	CREAF	Creative Labs	29.37	9.37	5.1	12.25	9.75	-20.41%	-55.68%
NASD	DELL	Dell	118.25	35.00	72.8	108.59	105.63	-2.73%	151.49%
NASD	DIMD	Diamond Mult.	16.50	5.50	46.9	6.13	5.63	-8.16%	-36.62%
NYSE	DIS	Disney	42.75	24.81	33.8	34.44	31.75	-7.80%	-67.93%
NASD	EIDSY	Eidos Int.	21.75	6.25	-	13.00	12.25	-5.77%	0.00%
NASD	ERTS	Electronic Arts	57.12	29.81	38.3	50.66	48.69	-3.89%	28.76%
NASD	XPRT	Expert Software	8.25	2.25	16.5	3.50	2.81	-19.64%	-21.05%
NASD	GTIS	GT Interactive	12.87	5.25	-	7.38	6.00	-18.64%	-5.88%
NYSE	MC	Matsushita	207.00	135.12	45.6	160.00	141.31	-11.68%	-7.03%
AMEX	HAS	Hasbro	40.93	25.75	43.6	36.19	35.75	-1.21%	13.49%
NYSE	HWP	Hewlett Packard	82.37	49.00	18.6	55.50	52 75	-4.95%	-15.43%
NYSE	IBM	IBM	138.12	88.62	20.9	132.50	125.38	-5 38%	19.83%
NASD	INTC	Intel	100.75	65.65	26.7	84.44	86.19	2.07%	22.69%
NASD	INGR	Intergraph	14.18	6.40	-	7.00	7.00	0.00%	-30.00%
NASD	IPLY	Interplay	8.25	5.25	-	6.75	5.25	-22.22%	-12.50%
NASD	LGCY	Legacy	3.25	0.25	-	0.47	0.38	-20 00%	650.00%
NASD	LOGIY	Logitech	19.00	11.50	16.4	13.25	11.50	-13.21%	-23.33%
NASD	MPRS	MicroProse	39 37	2.87	-	3.19	5.75	80 39%	162.86%
NASD	MSFT	Microsoft	119.62	59 00	62.4	109 94	104.25	-5.17%	61.32%
NYSE	MWY	Midway	26.81	12.00	12.7	15.13	14.56	-3.72%	-19.93%
NASD	NSCP	Netscape	44.62	14.87	-	28.56	29.38	2.84%	20.51%
NYSE	PHG	Phillips	102.87	54.12	16.5	81.69	76.81	-5.97%	26.96%
NASD	SEVL	7th Level	12.62	1.25	-	4.13	3 97	-3.79%	135.19%
NASD	RCOT	Recoton	39.43	12.50	18.4	34.06	29.50	-13.39%	118.52%
NASD	ROMT	Rom Tech Inc.	3.12	0.93	12.0	1.63	1.44	-11.54%	-43.21%
NYSE	SGI	Silicon Graphics	30.31	10.00	-	11.13	10.44	-6.18%	-15.23%
NYSE	SNE	Sony Corp.	100.18	74 50	21.9	85.00	79.25	-6.76%	-12.67%
NASD	SYMC	Symantec	32.62	17.87	22.3	24 25	24.06	-0.77%	9.69%
NASD	TTWO	Take Two	8.75	4.50	-	6.06	5.75	-5.15%	12.20%
NASD	THQI	T-HQ	36.06	9.25	20.9	28 94	28.69	-0 86%	24.73%
NYSE	TWX	Time Warner	100.00	50.50	-	90.31	89.38	-1.04%	44.15%
NASD	TMSR	ThrustMaster	19.50	5.25	-	7 00	6 00	-14.29%	-52.71%
AMEX	VIA	Viacom	69.37	26.00	31.5	67.88	59.56	-12.25%	45.72%

Retailers and Distributors

NASD	AMES	Ames Stores	29.62	12.37	12.6	21.38	20.75	-2.92%	18.57%
NYSE	BBY	Best Buy	53.00	7.31	42.9	46.75	52 81	12.97%	186.44%
NYSE	CC	Circuit City	54.50	31.00	35.5	51.56	40.13	-22.18%	12.83%
NYSE	CPU	Comp USA	38.00	14.50	52.3	18.94	17.25	-8.91%	-44.35%
NASD	EGGS	EggHead	29.12	5.50	-	14.50	12.50	-13.79%	92.31%
NASD	GGUY	Good Guys	15.75	6.00	-	8.88	8.19	-7.75%	7.38%
NYSE	MAY	May Dept Stores	70.87	49.87	19.1	64.19	62 00	-3.41%	17.67%
NASD	NAVR	Navarre	12.75	2.00	-	5.69	4.88	-14.29%	129.41%
NYSE	S	Sears	65.00	38.75	14.1	50.75	48 25	-4.93%	6.63%
NYSE	SME	Service Merch.	4.87	1.50	31.3	1.63	1.88	15.38%	-11.76%
NASD	SPLS	Staples	34.25	15.37	51.6	32.88	30.94	-5.89%	67.23%
NYSE	TAN	Tandy	58.31	30.37	43.3	56.81	56.75	-0.11%	47.16%
NASD	TOPS	Tops Appliance	6.43	0.93	-	3.63	2.94	-18.97%	176.47%
NYSE	TOY	Toys R Us	37.12	19.50	12.0	22.75	20.00	-12.09%	-36 38%
NYSE	WMT	Walmart	69.68	30.25	35.6	63.13	62.38	-1.19%	58.16%

"Source. Nordby International Inc. (nordby.com). Boulder, CO"
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INDEX COMPARISONS

	07/31/98 Close	08/14/98 Close	Net Change	% Change
GameWEEK Composite Index	1552.82	1475.78	-77.05	-4.96
GameWEEK Publishers Index	1476.47	1397.24	-79.23	-5.37
GameWEEK Retailers/Dist.	2068.84	2017.45	-51.38	-2.48
NASDAQ	1872.39	1790.19	-82.20	-4.39
Dow Jones Indust. Avg.	8883.29	8425.00	-458.29	-5.16
S&P 500 Stock Index	1120.67	1062.75	-57.92	-5.17
Russel 2000	419.75	402.79	-16.96	-4.04

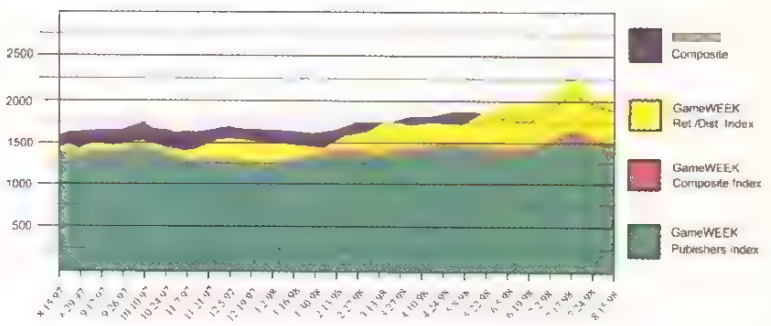
GAINERS AND LOSERS

GAINERS	% Change	LOSERS	% Change
MicroProse	80.39%	Interplay	-22.22%
Acclaim	19.23%	Circuit City	-22.18%
Apple Computer	16.97%	Creative Labs	-20.41%
Service Merch.	15.38%	Legacy	-20.00%
Best Buy	12.97%	Expert Software	-19.64%

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Advances	9
Declines	46
Unchanged	1

Index Comparison



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JUNE RANK	JULY RANK	TITLE	PLATFORM	MANUFACTURER	AVERAGE RETAIL PRICE
3	1	Banjo-Kazooie	Nintendo 64	Nintendo of America	$50
**	2	WWF Warzone	Sony PlayStation	Acclaim Ent.	$46
1	3	Gran Turismo Racing	Sony PlayStation	Sony Computer Ent.	$41
**	4	Mission Impossible	Nintendo 64	Infogrames	$61
10	5	Mortal Kombat 4	Sony PlayStation	Midway Home Ent.	$44
11	6	Mortal Kombat 4	Nintendo 64	Midway Home Ent.	$51
6	7	Goldeneye 007	Nintendo 64	Nintendo of America	$61
**	8	NFL Xtreme	Sony PlayStation	Sony Computer Ent.	$41
8	9	Road Rash 3D	Sony PlayStation	Electronic Arts	$42
5	10	Tekken 3	Sony PlayStation	Namco	$45
2	11	MLB With Ken Griffey Jr.	Nintendo 64	Nintendo of America	$51
7	12	Quest 64	Nintendo 64	THQ	$62
17	13	Super Mario 64	Nintendo 64	Nintendo of America	$40
19	14	Mario Kart 64	Nintendo 64	Nintendo of America	$40
4	15	All Star Baseball '99	Nintendo 64	Acclaim Ent.	$61
18	16	Triple Play '99	Sony PlayStation	Electronic Arts	$41
21	17	Tomb Raider	Sony PlayStation	Eidos Interactive	$21
22	18	Crash Bandicoot	Sony PlayStation	Sony Computer Ent.	$21
14	19	MLB ' 99	Sony PlayStation	Sony Computer Ent.	$41
12	20	Vigilante 8	Sony PlayStation	Activision	$47
9	21	1080 Snowboarding	Nintendo 64	Nintendo of America	$50
15	22	Yoshi's Story	Nintendo 64	Nintendo of America	$50
**	23	Off Road Challenge	Nintendo 64	Midway Home Ent.	$60
16	24	Need For Speed III	Sony PlayStation	Electronic Arts	$41
**	25	MK Trilogy	Sony PlayStation	Midway Home Ent.	$21

**Not in Top 25 Last Month

Source: NPD TRSTS Video Game Tracking Service

Acclaim's WWF Warzone

Nintendo's *Banjo-Kazooie* comes in at number one for the month of July, which is really no surprise considering it is one of Nintendo's biggest releases of the year. However, coming out of nowhere to grab the second spot is Acclaim's *WWF Warzone* for the PlayStation. This just goes to show that the popularity of professional wrestling continues to grow at an alarming rate and that Acclaim picked the perfect time to release their game when there was very little competition to go up against. Expect to see the Nintendo version of *Warzone* on this chart next month

NPD THE NPD GROUP, INC.

GameWEEK

Top 10 Best Selling Videogame Accessories

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD
JULY, 1998

RANK	ACCESSORY	PLATFORM	MANUFACTURER	AVERAGE RETAIL PRICE
1	Dual Shock Controller	PlayStation	Sony Computer Ent.	$30
2	Memory Card Value Pak	PlayStation	InterAct Accessories	$15
3	RFU Adaptor	PlayStation	InterAct Accessories	$19
4	Memory Card	PlayStation	Sony Computer Ent.	$21
5	RF Adaptor 2	PlayStation	Sony Computer Ent.	$25
6	RFU Adaptor	Nintendo 64	InterAct Accessories	$20
7	Controller	PlayStation	Sony Computer Ent.	$20
8	Blue Controller	Nintendo 64	Nintendo of America	$30
9	Memory Card 15X	PlayStation	Mad Catz	$15
10	Superpad	Super Nintendo	InterAct Accessories	$10

Source: NPD TRSTS Video Game Tracking Service

Sony's Dual Shock Controller

A great measuring stick of a console system's popularity is the amount of peripherals and other accessories that are being sold for it. Of the top ten accessories sold in July, seven of them are for PlayStation, led by Sony's *Dual Shock Conrtroller*, and only two for Nintendo 64. The last is InterAct's *Superpad* for the Super Nintendo, proving that 16-bit is still going.

Top 10 Best Selling PlayStation Games

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD
JULY, 1998

JUNE RANK	JULY RANK	TITLE	MANUFACTURER	AVERAGE RETAIL PRICE
**	1	WWF Warzone	Acclaim Ent.	$46
1	2	Gran Turismo Racing	Sony Computer Ent.	$41
4	3	Mortal Kombat 4	Midway Home Ent.	$44
**	4	NFL Xtreme	Sony Computer Ent.	$41
3	5	Road Rash 3D	Electronic Arts	$42
2	6	Tekken 3	Namco	$45
9	7	Triple Play '99	Electronic Arts	$41
10	8	Tomb Raider	Eidos Interactive	$21
**	9	Crash Bandicoot	Sony Computer Ent.	$21
7	10	MLB '99	Sony Computer Ent.	$41

**Not in Top 10 Last Month

Source: NPD TRSTS Video Game Tracking Service

Sony's NFL Xtreme

Acclaim rocks the PlayStation as *WWF Warzone* debuts at number one, taking the title from Sony's *Gran Turismo Racing*. Midway's *Mortal Kombat 4* stays in the hunt by moving up one spot. Sony's *NFL Xtreme* makes an impressive debut at number four, but don't expect the glory to last as Midway's *NFL Blitz* is preparing for release in September. Baseball games across all platforms slipped this month except for EA Sports' Triple Play 99 which jumps up two spots.

LicensingWeek

Coming Soon

January 1, 1999

OFFICIAL NPD TRSTS

Top 20 Best Selling PC Games

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD
JUNE 1998

LAST MONTH	THIS MONTH	TITLE	MANUFACTURER	AVERAGE RETAIL PRICE
1	1	StarCraft	Blizzard	$42
2	2	Unreal	GT Interactive	$39
3	3	Deer Hunter	WizardWorks	$20
6	4	Cabela's Big Game Hunter	Activision	$20
**	5	X Files	Fox Interactive	$36
**	6	Rocky Mountain Trophy Hunter	WizardWorks	$20
**	7	Final Fantasy VII	Eidos Interactive	$44
7	8	Myst	Broderbund	$18
5	9	Titanic: Adventure Out of Time	Cyberflix	$22
12	10	Duke Nukem 3D	Formgen	$11
13	11	MS Flight Simulator 98	Microsoft	$47
15	12	SimCity 2000 Special Ed.	Maxis	$20
10	13	Nascar Track	Sierra Sports	$10
**	14	Descent: Freespace	Interplay Productions	$41
**	15	MechCommander	Microprose	$44
8	16	Deer Hunter: Extended Season	WizardWorks	$11
**	17	Riven: The Sequel to Myst	Red Orb	$40
**	18	Diablo	Blizzard	$30
11	19	Trophy Bass	Sierra Sports	$11
**	20	Links LS 98	Access Software	$35

**NOT IN TOP 20 LAST MONTH

Source: The NPD Group - SofTrends

Blizzard's Starcraft

For the month of June the top three PC games remain constant with Blizzard's *StarCraft* at the helm. The game has already sold a million copies worldwide and should continue to dominate the real time strategy market until Westwood's *Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun* hits later this fall. Impressive debuts come from Fox Interactive's *X Files* and Eidos Interactive's PC version of the PlayStation hit *Final Fantasy VII*. *Cabela's Big Game Hunter* from Activision's recently acquired Head Games division takes aim at WizardWorks' top selling *Deer Hunter* for the number one hunting sim.

NPD THE NPD GROUP, INC. GameWEEK

Top 10 Best Selling Nintendo 64 Games

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD
JULY, 1998

JUNE RANK	JULY RANK	TITLE	PUBLISHER	AVERAGE RETAIL PRICE
2	1	Banjo-Kazooie	Nintendo of America	$50
**	2	Mission Impossible	Infogrames	$61
7	3	Mortal Kombat 4	Midway Home Entertainment	$51
4	4	Goldeneye 007	Nintendo of America	$61
1	5	MLB w/Ken Griffey Jr.	Nintendo of America	$51
5	6	Quest 64	THQ	$62
9	7	Super Mario 64	Nintendo of America	$40
10	8	Mario Kart 64	Nintendo of America	$40
3	9	All Star Baseball ' 99	Acclaim Entertainment	$61
6	10	1080 Snowboarding	Nintendo of America	$50

**Not in Top 10 Last Month Source: NPD TRSTS Video Game Tracking Service

Nintendo's Banjo-Kazooie

Nintendo's *Banjo-Kazooie* is the top game for July on N64. Expect this title to stick around through Christmas as the next really big game due from Nintendo is *Zelda* in November. Infogrames' drops in at number two with their spy simulation *Mission: Impossible*, a game that many thought would never be released. Once again timing is everything as *Mission: Impossible* comes out during a period when there isn't much to compete against.

Top 10 Best Selling 1998 Videogames

BASED ON ITEMS INTRODUCED IN 1998 ONLY
RANKED ON UNITS SOLD
JULY, 1998

RANK	TITLE	PLATFORM	MANUFACTURER	AVERAGE RETAIL PRICE
1	Banjo-Kazooie	Nintendo 64	Nintendo of America	$50
2	WWF Warzone	PlayStation	Acclaim Ent.	$46
3	Gran Turismo Racing	PlayStation	Sony Computer Ent.	$41
4	Mission Impossible	Nintendo 64	Infogrames	$61
5	Mortal Kombat 4	PlayStation	Midway Home Ent.	$44
6	Mortal Kombat 4	Nintendo 64	Midway Home Ent.	$51
7	NFL Xtreme	PlayStation	Sony Computer Ent.	$41
8	Road Rash 3D	PlayStation	Electronic Arts	$42
9	Tekken 3	PlayStation	Namco	$45
10	MLB w/ Ken Griffey Jr.	Nintendo 64	Nintendo of America	$51

Source: NPD TRSTS Video Game Tracking Service

Infogrames' Mission:

Infogrames makes an impressive debut on the best selling 1998 games chart with *Mission: Impossible*, especially when you compare its price point to the other games on the list. The cosole race is still dead even as six games come in for PlayStation and four for Nintendo 64. Midway has to be pleased as their *Mortal Komabt 4* is selling big on both systems.

LicensingWeek

The Magazine For Entertainment Licensing

From the publishers of GameWEEK

The Soft-Launch:

This new bi-weekly news source for the multi-billion dollar licensing industry is soft launching through a series of pull-out sections from within sister publication GameWEEK magazine. Utilizing the expertise of the GameWEEK editorial staff, LicensingWEEK covers the industry from the interactive entertainment perspective. Licensing has become a significant sector within the interactive entertainment business — and to cover it within the confines of a small news section in GameWEEK would not do it justice.

With CyberActive Publishing's (publisher of GameWEEK) strong backing and with partnerships forming with the IEMA (Interactive Entertainment Merchant's Association) and the LIMA (Licensing Industry Merchandisers' Association), LicensingWEEK's introduction to the $7 billion gaming industry has all the key elements of success.

The Contents:

The editors of LicensingWEEK dive into licensing issues from the sector they know better than anybody – games. Therefore, the editorial content will be largely focused upon the licensing of products and brands relevant to the interactive entertainment industry. The three editorial directions cover the key industry aspects: Licensing In, Licensing Out, and Licensing at Retail. Rounding-out the editorial staff are several new industry experts who have been retained as free-lance journalists. Working closely with the aforementioned industry associations, LicensingWEEK will give its readers a truly professional view of the business of licensing.

The Circulation:

During the course of the soft-launch from within the pages of GameWEEK, the circulation will be that of its sister publication: 61,000 interactive entertainment industry professionals (31,000 retail buyers and executives, 11,000 retail store managers, 10,000 manufacturing executives, and 9,000 developer executives), plus the 15,700 licensing trade-specific executives from the LIMA membership and their annual show, Licensing 98. The final controlled circulation of LicensingWEEK has not yet been determined. The frequency during the soft launch will be twice monthly (or bi-weekly) until January - at which time we expect to have the magazine as a weekly stand-alone publication. Bonus distributions through calendar 1998 include the following events: ECTS '98, the Babbages Vendor Show, the Electronics Boutique Fall Vendor Show, Fall Retail Vision, the Focus On Video Show (Canadian), Nintendo's Space World Show. Paid subscriptions are available to those not approved by the publisher for a complimentary subscription at the charter rate of $63.95 per year. The single-copy or newsstand price (if any) has yet to be determined.

1998 Production Schedule

Issue Number	Product Reservation Deadline	Material Submission Deadline	Material Published Deadline	Publication In Mail
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
September 15	08/15	08/20	08/25	08/30
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
October 15	09/15	09/20	09/25	09/30
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
November 15	10/15	10/20	10/25	10/30
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
December 15	11/15	11/20	11/25	11/30
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

The Rate Card (Charter Rates Provided)

[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Full Page	$4,120	$3,625	$3,080
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
1/2 Page	$2,420	$2,135	$1,815
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Back Cover	$5,170	$4,550	$4,000

* Premium positions available upon request.
* Rates listed above are charter rates for 1998 only.

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CyberActive Publishing is looking for qualified candidates to add to its sales staff based in our east coast offices in Wilton, CT as well as our new West Coast office. We have openings in the following positions:

Sales Manager: GameWEEK is looking for the right individual who will be responsible for managing, maintaining, and establishing relationships with first and third party software manufacturers. Previous advertising sales experience is required, as is a working knowledge of the gaming industry. (West Coast Offices)

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CyberActive Publishing is looking for qualified candidates to add to its editorial and production staff based in our east-coast offices in Wilton, CT. If you have a desire to work in a fast paced, team oriented and fun environment please contact us. We have openings in the following positions:

Associate Editor: This position will be responsible for writing news articles, feature stories and game reviews and previews for our flagship publication, GameWEEK. A degree in English, Journalism or Communications is preferred along with a working knowledge of the business side of the interactive entertainment industry. (East Coast Offices)

Production Artist: This position will contribute to the layout, design, and overall look of GameWEEK and other CyberACTIVE projects. Knowledge of Quark, Photoshop and Illustrator in a Mac environment is a must. (East Coast Offices)

Senior Editor: GameWEEK is also looking for a qualified, dedicated west-coast editor to handle hard-hitting news stories, in-depth feature articles, and critical reviews/previews. This person must be based in the San Francisco Bay area and have an extensive knowledge of the interactive entertainment industry. Responsibilities will include making industry contacts, visiting companies in the area and, of course, playing the latest games. (West Coast Offices)

If you think you're up to the task please submit resumes to:

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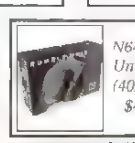

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The Last Word

Forced Feedback

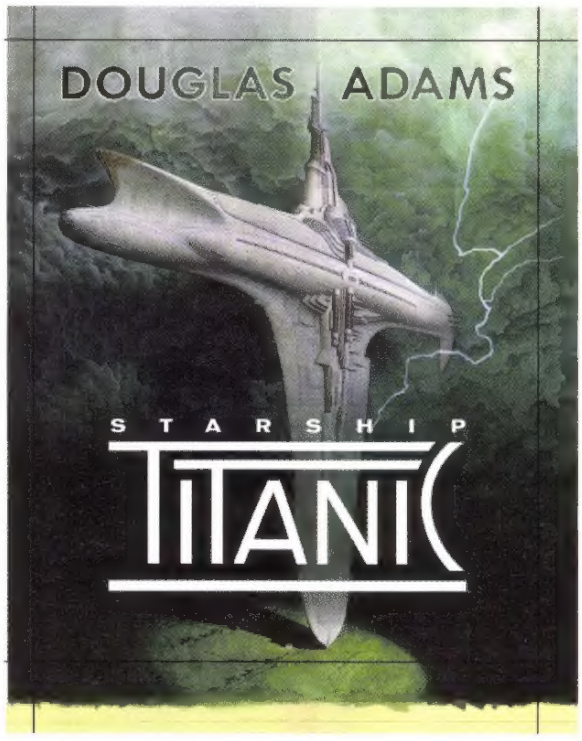
"The Last Word" has a new topic open for discussion in each issue. Opinions of the guest editors do not necessarily reflect those of this publication.

DON'T DREAM IT BUILD IT — Especially if it's mass market.

By Gilles Dana, Senior Vice President, Publisher, Simon & Schuster Interactive

We established Simon & Schuster Interactive five years ago. As an off-shoot of one of America's largest entertainment publishers (Simon & Schuster, Inc.), we were something of a unique start-up in the then burgeoning new CD-ROM software market. Buyers, retailers, and salespeople were forever asking us "What does a book publisher know about software?"

Today, after abundant success with



Star Trek, Richard Scarry, Starship Titanic and forthcoming bonanzas such as *Joy of Cooking* (joint venture with CompuWorks /GT Interactive) and *Sabrina The Teenage Witch* (joint venture with Knowledge Adventure/Cendant), we no longer get questions about what we are doing in the software business. In fact, there are a lot of similarities between the two businesses. And as software jumps onto the mass-market stage with titles such as *Deer Hunter* and *Barbie*, one could make the case that the two businesses start to blend.

From the outset, all we heard was how important it was to have strong brands. This was nothing new to us. In publishing the brand is best known as the author. Our authors don't appreciate being lumped in with utility applications or a hardware peripherals — but if calling Douglas Adams a brand closes the sale — you can call Douglas Adams a brand!

Even without the author, at Simon & Schuster we have re-packaged and sold branded content in all forms. Star Trek is the most successful book line in the history of publishing. We sell a Star Trek book somewhere in the world every 13 seconds. Our mass-market division is constantly on the lookout for strong licenses. As a division of Viacom, Inc. we don't have to look far for such properties.

SABRINA THE TEENAGE WITCH

This fall we will release *Sabrina The Teenage Witch : Spellbound*, a wonderful new adventure game for girls. The hit ABC-TV series, a Viacom Production, is number one with girls 2-18. Archway Paperbacks (Pocket Books), our sister division, is currently launching a new mass market series of Sabrina paperbacks. Our software will be a natural brand-extension of the show and the books. Not only will it feature the voice of Sabrina star, Melissa Joan Hart, but also the voice of every major cast member on the show.

Geffen Records will release a special *Sabrina The Teenage Witch* audio CD this fall incorporating music from the show and special appearances by such new artists and such established acts as the Spice Girls. Simon & Schuster Interactive, Archway Paperbacks and Geffen Records are cooperating in an enormous promotional contest. As a first prize, some lucky individual will be flown to Hollywood to record their very own single in Geffen's studios.

STARSHIP TITANIC

It was a different kind of magic at work this spring, when Douglas Adams launched *Starship Titanic* a graphic adventure game that relied on a revolutionary new text-parser engine known as 'Spooki-talk.' Douglas dubbed the parser 'Spooki-talk' because the more you converse with the animated characters in this adventure game the more you begin to believe your are having an actual conversation with them.

Starship Titanic was unlike anything we have every done at S&S Interactive. A joint venture with Douglas' company, The Digital Village, *Starship Titanic* has been an enormous critical success. The game was published simultaneous in the UK, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Germany, Australia and Israel.

You could describe our effort with *Starship Titanic* as brand building. We used the author/creator and our skills as PR marketers to create an enormous awareness for *Starship Titanic* — television, national and local print, even radio interviews and promotions spread the word about *Starship Titanic*.

JOY OF COOKING

Joy of Cooking is nothing if not a brand. Perhaps better described as an institution, *Joy* , the mother of all cookbooks, is 68 years old. Last year our trade division sold more than a million copies of the $30-newly-revised edition. This hardcover book became a number one New York Times Bestseller and continues to sell at record volumes.

Along with our partners at CompuWorks we will release *Joy of Cooking* the CD-ROM Edition. No cookbook software has a brand to leverage as strong as that of *Joy*.

RICHARD SCARRY'S BUSYTOWN

We couldn't be a publisher without a kid's line. And *Richard Scarry's Busy Town* is our 'family' brand. We have published four titles in this line. Simon & Schuster Children's does several series of books; Nickelodeon and Showtime (both Viacom companies) air the popular television series and our Paramount Parks division supports the brand in their theme parks.

This year marks the 35th Birthday of the Busytown characters — Huckle, Lowly Worm, Sargeant Murphy, Hilda, Mr. Frumble, Mr. Fix-it and the whole gang-and to mark the occasion Viacom Consumer Products has launched a national mall tour. Here at Simon & Schuster Interactive we are venturing into new territory with a seasonal product. Taking a lesson in mass-marketing from our print and television divisions, we decided to launch *Richard Scarry's Best Christmas Ever* CD-ROM.

STAR TREK

For us, Star Trek has always been our brand. It came to us as a mass market publisher. We've been in the Star Trek business longer than any other licensee. Our first and formative success in software was *Star Trek The Next Generation™ Interactive Technical Manual*, a 500,000 copy bestseller, based — not on a TV episode or a movie-but on a popular trade paperback from Pocket Books. We are one of the first publishers to venture into the experimental world of interactive episodes. Our PC and MAC versions of *Star Trek™ Klingon* and *Star Trek™: Borg* are still two of our most popular skus.

Our sell-line for *Creator* is a close approximation of our corporate philosophy — Don't Dream it Build It — especially if it's mass market.

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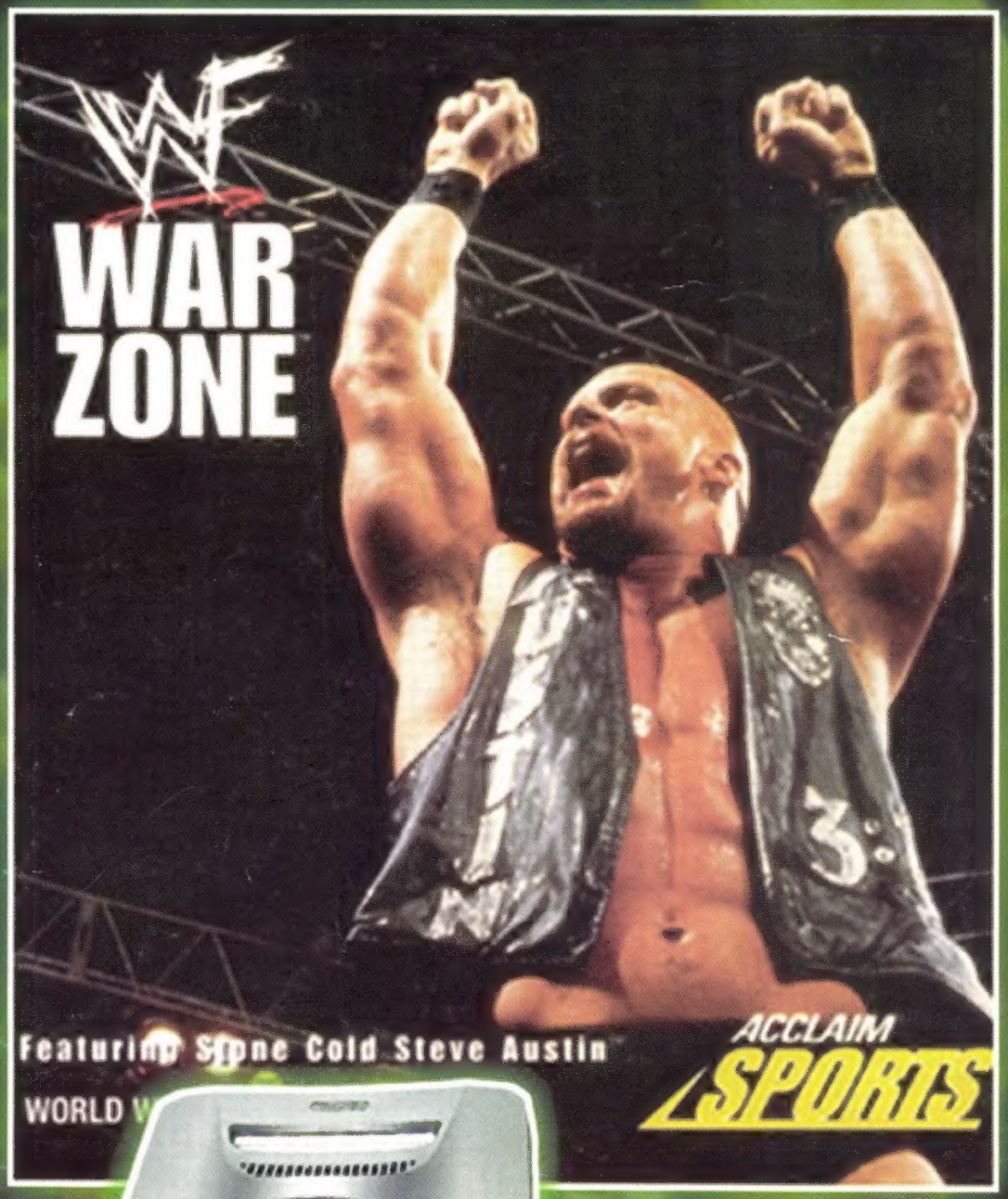

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